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Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Myanmar

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions, covers the period from 1 February 2013 to 30 June 2017 and is the fourth report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar to be submitted to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The report provides information on grave violations against children in Myanmar and identifies parties to the conflict responsible for such violations.

During the reporting period, armed clashes in conflict-affected areas of the country continued to put children at risk and the country task force on monitoring and reporting documented and verified grave violations against children by the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) and other parties to the conflict, including all seven armed groups listed in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. Grave violations against children increased in some areas owing to military operations and intensified clashes in several areas of the country, notably in Shan, Kachin and Rakhine States.

Following the signing of a Joint Action Plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Tatmadaw between the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations in June 2012, more than 849 children were released from the ranks of the Myanmar Armed Forces. Progress towards the implementation of the Joint Action Plan resulted in an annual decrease in the number of verified child recruitment cases. The country task force verified that 153 children had been recruited in 2013, 47 in 2014, 22 in 2015 and 3 in 2016. While this reflects a discernable pattern of decrease, it is important to note that, owing to lengthy verification processes, cases of recruitment may manifest themselves in later years. The reporting period indicated progressive engagement by the Government of Myanmar on the Joint Action Plan. Remaining gaps, particularly with regard to accountability measures and the speed of case verification, should be addressed within the shortest possible amount of time.

During the reporting period, the country task force also engaged with all listed armed groups with a view to ending and preventing grave violations against children. Five of the listed groups showed interest in engaging with the United Nations on child protection. However, protracted conflicts and recent clashes, particularly in border areas and non-Government-controlled areas, represented a particular challenge in terms of advancing child protection, and frequent incidents of child recruitment and use, the killing and maiming of children or the abduction of children were verified by

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the country task force. In line with resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions, increased engagement should be sought with the support of the Government of Myanmar, most urgently with those parties engaged in the Government-led peace process.

In the present report, it is noted that the country task force and its partners remained constrained by access and security impediments that presented a challenge to effective monitoring, verification and reporting of grave violations against children by listed parties in Myanmar. The report contains a series of recommendations addressed to all parties aimed at better protecting children affected by armed conflict in Myanmar.

I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from 1 February 2013 to 30 June 2017, has been submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011), 2068 (2012) and 2225 (2015) and specifies grave violations against children affected by armed conflict in Myanmar. It is a follow-up to my third report (S/2013/258) and provides an update on the implementation of the conclusions of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict (S/AC.51/2013/2) issued on 16 August 2013, pursuant to my third report.

2. The present report provides an overview of political and security developments, examines trends and patterns of violations committed against children and highlights progress made in ending and preventing these violations since the issuance of my previous report. It also contains a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening action for the protection of children affected by armed conflict in Myanmar.

II. Overview of political and security developments

A. Political developments

3. Following the elections held in November 2010 and the appointment of the Union Solidarity and Development Party-led administration in March 2011, the National League for Democracy (NLD) of Aung San Suu Kyi won a majority of seats in the parliamentary elections of November 2015. The subsequent transfer of power proceeded peacefully on 31 March 2016. Of the 22 government ministries, the Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) appoints ministers for the Ministries of Home Affairs, Border Affairs and Defence. The same Constitution was used to enact the State counsellor law, creating a new Ministry of the State Counsellor, which, like the President, is accountable directly to Parliament.

4. Since the elections, the NLD-dominated Parliament has adopted legislation that promotes and protects civil rights, and has amended and repealed laws that allowed for intrusive State intervention on security grounds. On the other hand, the Government has increasingly drawn upon the Unlawful Associations Act of 1908 to arrest and detain people, including children, considered to be part of an unlawful association, without clearly defining the term.

5. The change in the administration following the holding of the November 2015 elections had a temporarily impact on the activities related to children and armed conflict as the new administration reinstated the Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children in May 2016, after which those activities resumed.

B. Security developments

6. It is estimated that more than 20 armed groups are currently active in Myanmar, although an exact assessment of the number is difficult as a result of the frequent splits, mergers and shifting alliances between those groups. Throughout the reporting period, Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States were the areas most affected by clashes between government armed forces and armed groups and, at times, among armed groups.

7. Between 2011 and 2013, 13 bilateral ceasefire agreements were signed between the Government and armed groups. On 15 October 2015, following a four-year national dialogue initiated by the former President of Myanmar, U Thein Sein, and

led by the Minister of the President's Office, U Aung Min, the Government and eight armed groups in Myanmar signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. Although it was not signed by all active armed groups in Myanmar, the Agreement is a landmark achievement in the peace process.

8. In August 2016, the new administration organized the first 21st-Century Panglong Conference to advance the peace process, with the historic participation of nearly all armed groups in Myanmar, including those that had not signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. The second 21st-Century Panglong Conference was held in May 2017. The two conferences marked the beginning of a broader peace process that has been declared a top priority by the Government. Notwithstanding those advances, recent months have seen armed clashes in several parts of the country, primarily northern and western Myanmar.

Developments in Kachin and Shan States

9. In June 2011, fighting resumed between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Tatmadaw in Kachin State, breaking a 17-year-old ceasefire agreement. Subsequently, fighting also flared up in northern parts of Shan State between the Tatmadaw and local armed groups. In the context of this renewed conflict with KIA, the country task force documented fighting by the "people's militias" (pyithusit) alongside the Tatmadaw for the first time in early 2016. In November 2015, clashes also resumed between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S), a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. In November 2016, the formation of the Northern Alliance-Burma (NA-B), comprising KIA, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), TNLA and the Arakan Army (AA), led to a further intensification of the armed conflict in Kachin and Shan States. In June 2017, military operations in Tanai Township, Kachin State, were reported, as well as artillery shelling in civilian areas by unknown perpetrators. Active combat has made access for humanitarian operations impossible and has led to the displacement of thousands of civilians, including children. In eastern Shan State, sporadic clashes were also documented between the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the National Democratic Alliance Army and in Kayin State between the Tatmadaw, including its border guard forces, comprising former members of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), and a splinter group of DKBA.

10. Owing to fighting in Kachin and Shan States, more than 119,000 people depended on humanitarian assistance, including more than 98,000 who were still displaced as of June 2017. Nearly 50 per cent of displaced persons live in areas beyond government control, where humanitarian access for national and international organizations is limited or absent. Several thousand displaced persons have crossed the Myanmar-Chinese border.

Developments in Rakhine State

11. In Rakhine State, outbreaks of deadly violence occurred in 2013, 2014, 2016 and again in 2017. During the reporting period, the last outbreak of violence followed an attack by an armed group, self-identified as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, against three border guard police posts on 9 October 2016, which triggered extensive military clearance operations by governmental security forces. The United Nations estimates that that triggered the displacement of approximately 90,000 people, both internally to other parts of northern Rakhine State and into Bangladesh. In March 2017, the United Nations Children's Fund estimated that 57 per cent of the 74,000 Rohyinga civilians who had fled into Bangladesh were children. Although the military clearance operation by the government security forces officially ended in February 2017, numerous smaller localized operations by government security forces

continued. In addition, intercommunal tensions and violence continued to affect Rakhine State.

Developments in Karen State

12. In August and September 2016, clashes in Karen State between the DKBA splinter group and the Tatmadaw and its border guard forces forced thousands of villagers to flee, with some reportedly crossing into Thailand.

C. Parties to conflict in Myanmar

13. During the reporting period, more than 20 armed groups operated in Myanmar with various levels of autonomy and territorial control and in diverse relationships with the Government. Armed groups in Myanmar are complex in structure, and alliances between groups shift rapidly, leading to a fluid situation in terms of parties to conflict. Not all armed groups engaged actively in fighting during the reporting period.

14. In addition to the Myanmar army (Tatmadaw Kyi), including integrated border guard forces, seven armed groups are listed as perpetrators of the recruitment and use of children in the annexes to my annual report on children and armed conflict.

1. Parties to conflict listed as perpetrators of recruitment and use

Tatmadaw Kyi and integrated border guard forces

15. The Myanmar Armed Forces consist of the Tatmadaw Kyi, the navy (Tatmadaw Yay) and the air force (Tatmadaw Lay). The Tatmadaw Kyi represents by far the largest branch. Auxiliary forces supporting the Tatmadaw include the border guard forces and the people's militias.

16. The border guard forces were created by the Government in 2009 and incorporate former armed groups into the Tatmadaw. Twenty-three armed groups accepted their conversion to border guard forces, although it required them to relinquish most of their operational and command autonomy. Once converted to border guard forces, former armed groups are included as a regular military force. The people's militias, however, maintain differing forms of affiliation with the Tatmadaw. While some units appear to be under the command and supervision of the Tatmadaw, others appear to operate as Tatmadaw-supported village militias, without a formal military structure.

17. The Government of Myanmar signed a Joint Action Plan with the United Nations in June 2012 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the Tatmadaw. Previously, Myanmar Defence Council directive 13/73 (1974) had required that, in order to be recruited, future soldiers be older than 18 years, with the exception of an elite programme that had allowed trainees to be recruited after they had reached the age of 16. In November 2013, the Tatmadaw released directive 3/1/131/Yay1(B), abolishing any recruitment of those younger than 18, although the application of the directive remains a challenge.

Democratic Karen Benevolent Army

18. The DKBA splinter group, which renamed itself the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, was formed in 2010 when Brigade 5 of DKBA split from the group to avoid integration into the Tatmadaw as border guard forces. In November 2011, the splinter group signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government. The armed group maintains close operational connections with the Karen National Union (KNU)/Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). It was first listed in the annexes to my annual

report in 2013 as perpetrating the recruitment and use of children. The country task force held a workshop with the group in June 2017, which raised the issue of the prohibition of underage recruitment.

Kachin Independence Army/Kachin Independence Organization

19. KIA is the armed wing of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), founded in 1961, and is the second-largest armed group in Myanmar. KIA is currently engaged in active fighting against the Government in Kachin and Shan States and has been listed since 2007 as perpetrating the recruitment and use of children. In November 2016, KIA announced the formation of NA-B along with three other armed groups, TNLA, MNDAA and AA.

Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army

20. KNLA is the military wing of KNU and is based in Kayin and Mon States. KNU/KNLA signed a bilateral ceasefire with the Government in January 2012 and is a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. The group has been listed since 2003 as perpetrating the recruitment and use of children. It has an official policy establishing 18 years as the minimum age for recruitment, which is, however, not consistently implemented. KNU/KNLA held a workshop with the country task force in September 2016 on prohibiting underage recruitment.

Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council

21. The KNLA Peace Council (KNLA-PC) was established in January 2007 as a splinter group of KNU. The group was listed the same year as perpetrating the recruitment and use of children. KNLA-PC renewed its ceasefire agreement with the Government in February 2012 and is a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. The country task force held a workshop with the group on the prohibition of underage recruitment in June 2017.

Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army

22. The Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA), founded in 1957 and listed in 2003 as perpetrating the recruitment and use of children, signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government in 2012 but is not a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. The group's area of operations is in Kayah State. KNPP/KA finalized a draft action plan with the United Nations in February 2016 that remained unsigned at the time of reporting, owing to resistance by the Government.

Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South

23. SSA-S, operating in Shan State, is the armed wing of RCSS and originated as a result of a split within the Mong Tai Army. The group signed a bilateral ceasefire agreement with the Government in December 2011 and became a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015. Notwithstanding its being a party to the Agreement, SSA-S clashed with the Tatmadaw several times after the group's accession. It has been listed since 2007 as perpetrating the recruitment and use of children.

United Wa State Army/United Wa State Party

24. UWSA is the armed wing of the United Wa State Party (UWSP). Located in the Wa Special Region of northern Shan State, UWSP administers six townships of the Wa Self-Administered Division as set out under the 2008 Constitution. The group's military wing is the largest armed group in Myanmar. It signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government in September 2011 but did not sign the Nationwide Ceasefire

Agreement. UWSA has been listed since 2006 as perpetrating the recruitment and use of children. It engaged with the United Nations in March and June 2015 on issues related to children and armed conflict.

2. Parties to conflict not listed as perpetrators of grave violations against children

Ta'ang National Liberation Army/Palaung State Liberation Front

25. TNLA is the armed wing of the Palaung State Liberation Front, founded in 1992, and operates in northern Shan State. In 2010, the area controlled by the Ta'ang was recognized by the Government as an administrative zone. TNLA has not signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government to date, and since November 2016 the group has been part of NA-B and actively involved in fighting against the Tatmadaw.

Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army

26. MNDAA controlled Kokang Special Region 1, in northern Shan State, from 1989 to 2009. A ceasefire with the Government was broken in 2009 when MNDAA refused to integrate into the border guard forces, leading to large-scale conflict between the group and government armed forces. Following renewed clashes between the Government and MNDAA in February 2016, the group joined NA-B.

D. Grave child rights violations

27. Notwithstanding the ongoing peace process, armed clashes expanded to new areas, including northern Rakhine State, and intensified in several townships in northern Myanmar, continuing to put children at risk. Throughout the reporting period, armed clashes in various regions of Myanmar resulted in grave violations against children.

28. Security constraints as well as the denial of access by the Government of Myanmar to several regions, notably to non-Government-controlled areas, continue to present a considerable challenge to the documentation and verification of grave violations perpetrated against children. In addition, the limited presence of United Nations and international child protection organizations in Kachin, Shan, northern Rakhine and Chin States hampered engagement with communities affected by grave violations. Therefore, while the information contained in the present report is indicative of the nature of violations perpetrated against children, it does not indicate their full gravity or scale.

29. While incidents of all six types of grave violations against children were documented during the reporting period, child recruitment and use was by far the most frequent violation, accounting for more than 83 per cent of all those documented. The second most frequent violation was killing and maiming, at nearly 8 per cent, followed by abductions (4 per cent), attacks on schools (3 per cent), sexual violence (2 per cent) and denial of humanitarian access (1 per cent). While the percentage of documented cases of recruitment and use compared with the total number of violations gradually decreased during the reporting period, killing and maiming increased proportionally, accounting for 25 per cent of all grave violations committed in the first half of 2017.

1. Recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups

30. While the number of cases of child recruitment and use by government armed forces decreased during the reporting period, the violation still represents a persistent challenge in Myanmar, with verified incidents attributed to both government armed forces and armed groups.

Recruitment and use by the Tatmadaw

31. Notwithstanding the advances made by the Government in ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, the country task force continued to document and verify such incidents committed by government armed forces throughout the reporting period. Information was received primarily through the hotline operated by the country task force, community monitoring and the forced labour complaint mechanism of the International Labour Organization. The establishment of a tripartite case review mechanism in 2014, involving the country task force, the Ministry of Immigration and Population and the Ministry of Defence/Tatmadaw, helped to accelerate the verification process with respect to children present in Tatmadaw forces. Furthermore, the information-gathering process was improved by the launch of a nationwide Government-led campaign.

32. During the reporting period, the country task force received 1,374 complaints regarding the recruitment of children by the Tatmadaw, of which 856 could be verified (42 cases in 2012, 135 in 2013, 377 in 2014, 152 in 2015, 101 in 2016 and 49 from January to June 2017), some of which had occurred prior to the reporting period. At the time of reporting, nearly 100 complaints regarding potential child soldiers who remained deployed in their battalions were under investigation by the tripartite review mechanism. Areas that had the highest numbers of child recruitment included urban areas of Yangon, Mandalay, Magway, Irrawaddy and Bago. Methods of recruitment included force and coercion and involved civilian and military brokers.

33. Children formally recruited were deployed in front-line areas but also took on other functions, including as guards and messengers, and received military training. At least 274 children had been recruited since the signing of the Joint Action Plan with the United Nations in June 2012 and were eligible to be discharged (49 in 2012, 153 in 2013, 47 in 2014, 22 in 2015 and 3 in 2016). Those figures indicate a steady decrease in the number of children recruited by the Tatmadaw since 2012, when the Government signed the Joint Action Plan. More consistent application of the age assessment guidelines could help to further decrease the number of children recruited.

34. In addition to the cases of formal recruitment, the country task force documented 32 incidents of the military use of children by the Tatmadaw, involving a total of 728 children, of which 7 incidents involving 84 children were verified. While the Tatmadaw issued a directive (No. 4/10/139/Yay(1)B) to all regional commands in December 2015 prohibiting the use of children in military activities, incidents of use continued. Children were used mainly as guides or porters (31), for fencing and digging (30), for cooking and fetching water (10), for the maintenance and cleaning of military camps and other general work, including carrying heavy materials (8) and for bringing water and food to soldiers in front-line areas (10).

Detention of children for desertion from the Tatmadaw

35. The country task force continued to document cases of wrongfully recruited children who had subsequently left the Tatmadaw, commonly labelled as "AWOL" (absent without leave). Some of these children were subsequently arrested by the armed forces or the police and either sent back to their battalions or detained on charges of desertion. The country task force documented 15 cases of the detention of children for being absent without leave in 2014, 6 in 2015, 7 in 2016 and 3 in the first six months of 2017. As at 30 June 2017, all of those children had been released.

36. For example, in August 2016 the country task force was informed through its hotline that a suspected minor was being detained at his battalion in Rakhine State after having been AWOL. After the country task force had sent a notification letter requesting his immediate release from detention, the Tatmadaw informed it that the

person had been released from detention and had been requested to perform light duties within the perimeter of the battalion pending verification.

Detention of children for alleged association with armed groups

37. The country task force verified the detention of 13 boys charged under law 17.1/2 of the Unlawful Associations Act of 1908 for alleged association with armed groups. In the first case, documented in early 2017, the Myanmar police force arrested, detained and initiated an investigation into the unlawful association of a 13-year-old boy from Yangon, who had allegedly been recruited and used as a spy by KIA. In two other incidents following the attacks of 9 October 2016 in northern Rakhine State, the country task force verified the detention of 10 boys and 2 young men by the border guard police in Buthidaung, Rakhine State. Five children had been charged under the Unlawful Associations Act and for the illegal possession of a deadly weapon and murder; four children were being detained in prison while awaiting final age assessment before their trial; and one child had died in detention, allegedly as a result of previous health issues.

Recruitment and use by armed groups

38. Owing to severe access restrictions, the country task force verified only a limited number of cases of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups. During the reporting period, 41 such incidents were documented, of which 22 were verified, involving 49 boys and 10 girls. Of the verified incidents, 18 were attributed to KIA, 2 to TNLA and 1 each to the All Burma Students Democratic Front and the Kayan New Land Party.

39. The country task force is particularly concerned by reports of so-called recruitment drives reportedly conducted by armed groups in conflict-affected areas where groups of civilians, including children, were allegedly abducted and forcibly recruited. The reports indicate that armed groups visited villages with a predetermined list of names of people whom they were planning to abduct and forcibly recruit. Such incidents were allegedly perpetrated by KIA, TNLA or combined forces in Kachin and northern Shan States. For example, in a verified incident that occurred on 26 November 2015, KIA abducted four girls in Ei Naing, in Lashio Township, Shan State. The girls were subsequently moved to different posts and reportedly received military training. The country task force located two of the four girls and is currently working towards their release.

40. Reports that armed groups have specifically targeted internally displaced persons for abduction, including from camps for the internally displaced, are also worrisome. For example, in September 2014 the country task force verified an incident involving the abduction of three male internally displaced persons, including a 17-year-old boy, from a camp for the internally displaced in Kachin State, reportedly by KIA. The boy managed to escape, although other incidents of recruitment were perpetrated by KIA during the reporting period.

2. Killing and maiming of children

41. Children continued to be the victims of improvised explosive devices, landmines and explosive remnants of war and indiscriminate attacks, including through shelling and cross-fire incidents between armed groups and between armed groups and the Tatmadaw. Most of the cases occurred in Shan and Kachin States and, after 2016, also in Rakhine State. The country task force verified 76 incidents of killing and maiming, in which 41 children had been killed and 104 maimed. It was also verified that since 2015 the number of children killed or maimed had risen as a

result of aggravated fighting in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States as well as the increased threat of landmines and other explosive devices.

42. Among the total number of verified incidents of the killing and maiming of children, 39 resulted from landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war (18 children killed and 63 injured), which were the primary causes of child casualties. While most of those incidents occurred in Kachin, Shan and Kayin States, 9 of the 14 States of Myanmar continued to be contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war, adversely affecting children. Direct clashes between the Tatmadaw and armed groups as well as ground engagements also continued to affect children, with 27 incidents verified (19 children killed and 34 maimed).

43. During the last quarter of 2016, following the military clearance operation carried out in the northern townships of Rakhine by a combined security force of Tatmadaw soldiers and border guard forces, the country task force received reports of 18 separate incidents, in which up to 40 children had been killed and 4 maimed, but was unable to verify that information as a result of access restrictions.

44. Verified incidents of killing and maiming were attributed to the Tatmadaw (21 incidents), KIA/KIO (4 incidents), TNLA (4 incidents), MNDAA (3 incidents) and KIA, TNLA and AA (1 joint incident). Attributing cases of killing and maiming remains challenging, owing in particular to access restrictions and cases of crossfire; 41 per cent of all verified child casualties could not be attributed to a specific party.

3. Rape and other forms of sexual violence

45. While sexual violence remained underreported, the country task force verified 9 cases and documented 21 during the reporting period. All documented incidents had been perpetrated by the Tatmadaw and committed against girls. The prosecution of rape and sexual violence by Tatmadaw soldiers falls under the jurisdiction of military courts, but it is unclear how such courts investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators. The country task force therefore has little information on concrete accountability measures taken by the Tatmadaw following such incidents.

46. In September 2015, a Tatmadaw soldier sexually abused an 8-year-old girl who was subsequently transported to Sittwe General Hospital in critical condition and died in October, following her transfer to Yangon General Hospital. The soldier was arrested by the police and transferred to military authorities. The country task force addressed a letter to the Ministry of Defence calling for an investigation and corresponding accountability measures, but did not receive a response. In another incident, in July 2016 a 4-year-old girl was sexually abused by an on-duty Tatmadaw sergeant in the Mandalay Region. The police arrested the perpetrator, and the sergeant was charged by both a civilian court and a military court-martial. The proceedings in both courts were ongoing at the time of reporting.

47. During the military clearance operation carried out in northern Rakhine State following the events of 9 October 2016, the country task force received reports of 15 cases of rape committed against girls in Maungdaw Township. The cases included sexual violence against girls, including gang rapes.

4. Abduction of children

48. Incidents of abduction affected 25 boys and 15 girls during the reporting period. Figures clearly showed an increase in the number of cases of abduction committed by armed groups at the end of 2015 and in 2016, which is likely linked to increased intensity of conflict during that period.

49. Almost half of the total number of reported incidents were attributed to the Tatmadaw (33, of which 8 were verified); 18 incidents (of which 14 were verified)

were attributed to KIA. However, it is likely that cases pertaining to armed groups are underreported, owing to lack of access to non-Government-controlled areas. More than two thirds of the total number of reported incidents of child abduction occurred in the context of larger-scale abductions involving adults.

50. In a verified incident that occurred in February 2017, a 12-year-old girl was abducted by KIA in Kutkai and held hostage by the group because her older brothers had refused to join it. During her captivity, the girl received military training. Following advocacy by the country task force, she was released to her village.

5. Attacks on schools and hospitals

51. With regard to attacks on schools and teachers, the country task force verified 12 of a total of 25 reported incidents. Of the 12 verified incidents, 4 were attributed to the Tatmadaw; 1 was a joint operation of the Tatmadaw and the Pansay Development Army; 5 were cases of crossfire involving the Tatmadaw and armed groups (TNLA (2), KIA (1), the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, formerly known as Harakah al-Yaqin (1), and the DKBA splinter group (1)); 1 was attributed to the splinter group; and 1 could not be attributed.

52. Attacks on schools included targeted attacks on school infrastructure; incidents of crossfire near schools that led to their partial or complete destruction; and the killing (one) and injury (one) of schoolteachers. For example, in early 2015 a Karen primary school in Hlaing Bwe Township in Kayin State was burned down by a battalion of the DKBA splinter group after pressure from a local religious leader prohibiting other religious foundations from working in the area. In August 2016, during fighting between KIA and the Tatmadaw, a mortar shell landed on a school in Hpa Kant Township, Kachin State, during school hours. A 10-year-old student and a teacher were injured by the explosion and subsequently hospitalized. In early June 2017, the Tatmadaw took cover in a middle school in Namkham Township, Shan State, during a one-hour firefight against TNLA. A total of 105 students and 11 teachers were trapped in the building during the incident. While no children were killed or injured, the school sustained damage and consequently remained closed for two days. Attacks on schools and teachers as well as insecurity prevented thousands of children from attending school in Kayin, Shan, Kachin, Chin and Rakhine States.

Military use of schools and hospitals

53. In addition to attacks on schools, the country task force documented 23 incidents of the military use of schools, of which 11 were verified; 10 were attributed to the Tatmadaw and 1 to KIA.

54. In 2014 and 2015, a school in Bhamo Township, Kachin State, was occupied by approximately 40 to 50 Tatmadaw personnel for an average duration of four to five days at a time to distribute monthly rations and organize battalion exchanges. The Tatmadaw vacated the school after the country task force had sent a letter expressing its concern. In another incident, in March 2015 more than 50 Tatmadaw soldiers occupied a school located in a church compound at the Robert camp for internally displaced persons in Bhamo Township for two days and used it as a sleeping space. Advocacy by local leaders, highlighting that the presence of Tatmadaw soldiers was putting the school and the camp population at risk, led the Tatmadaw to leave. In respect of armed groups, the country task force verified the temporary use of a school in Kachin State as a military training facility by KIA during the 2017 summer holidays. Following discussions between the United Nations and KIO representatives, KIA vacated the dormitory and prohibited the presence of active combatants near the premises.

55. In addition to the verified incidents, several schools were reportedly occupied by Tatmadaw soldiers and border guard police officers in northern Rakhine State at the end of 2016 and in early 2017 during military clearance operations in the area. The schools were reportedly used primarily to gather villagers together and interrogate them.

56. The country task force also verified the military occupation of one hospital by Tatmadaw soldiers, in Kutai Township, Shan State, in 2013.

C. Denial of humanitarian access

57. The country task force verified nine incidents of the denial of humanitarian access affecting children, of which four were attributed to the Tatamadaw and two to the Government; three could not be attributed. For example, in February 2015 an unknown perpetrator attacked a Myanmar Red Cross Society convoy in northern Shan State, leading to the death of a Myanmar Red Cross volunteer. The convoy was transporting civilians displaced by the Kokang armed conflict and was targeted several times by unknown assailants. In another incident, at the end of August 2016 the Tatmadaw stopped a vehicle of a local humanitarian organization transporting medicine to camps for internally displaced persons in eastern Kachin State and seized all the medicine in the vehicle. While the medicine was returned to the organization, the staff was forced to return to Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State.

58. In addition to specific incidents, broad access restrictions were a constant challenge for the country task force and international and national humanitarian organizations throughout the reporting period, particularly in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States.

59. In the northern part of Rakhine State, for example, immediately following the attacks of 9 October 2016 and the subsequent military operations, nearly all humanitarian activities had to be suspended across Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships as a result of movement restrictions imposed by the Government. Restrictions on civilian movement cost the life of a sick 2-year-old child in Buthidaung Township, northern Rakhine State, in March 2017 because the child's parents were unable to obtain the village departure certificate in time to allow a transfer to Buthidaung Hospital.

60. In Kachin State, despite discussions between the Government and KIO regarding access for the delivery of humanitarian aid, the Government refused to permit international humanitarian organizations to deliver relief supplies in areas beyond Government control after April 2016. Community-based organizations were permitted to deliver limited relief assistance in those areas. Furthermore, international humanitarian staff were limited in their access to people in camps for internally displaced persons in Government-controlled areas of Kachin and northern Shan States, owing to restrictions on the issuance of travel authorizations by the Government. In a worrisome development, at the end of July 2016 the Government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informed the international community of its plans to compel internally displaced persons in non-Government-controlled areas to cross conflict lines to receive food deliveries, endangering those in search of aid, including children. Access to areas north of Laukkaing in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone, where sporadic, small-scale clashes continue, remains restricted for all humanitarian staff.

E. Progress in ending and preventing grave violations by armed forces and groups in Myanmar

61. In an encouraging development, the armed forces made progress in implementing the Joint Action Plan, particularly with regard to the identification and release of child soldiers. Furthermore, several listed armed groups demonstrated their willingness to engage with the United Nations on issues relating to child protection. Four armed groups, including the KNPP/KA, KNU, the DKBA splinter group and KIA, expressed their willingness to develop and implement action plans, signalling an increased willingness to end the practice of child recruitment.

Armed forces (Tatmadaw)

62. Throughout the reporting period the country task force continued to meet regularly and engage with the Government on the implementation of the Joint Action Plan. In March 2014, the agreement with the United Nations was extended, and in September 2014 the Government adopted a workplan to accelerate the implementation of the Joint Action Plan.

63. More than 880 children and young people who had been recruited as children were released by the Tatmadaw during the period from February 2013 to June 2017, of whom 849 were released after identification and joint verification by the country task force and the Government. The number of children released under the Joint Action Plan totalled 42 in 2012, 134 in 2013, 377 in 2014, 146 in 2015, 101 in 2016 and 49 from January to June 2017.

64. The United Nations and its partners have been working with the Government of Myanmar through the Interministerial Working Group on Reintegration to ensure access to socioeconomic reintegration for all released children. All of the 849 children formerly associated with the armed forces benefited from an initial psychosocial debriefing at the time of their discharge and underwent a medical examination. In addition, 647 discharged children and young people (81 per cent) were enrolled in socioeconomic reintegration activities, including education support (63), vocational training (192) and income-generating activities (364). In 13 cases, structural support for the community of reintegrated children was provided, and in 15 cases medical assistance (including long-term assistance) was considered necessary. In 82 cases, the young people were referred to the Department of Social Welfare, as they were more than 20 years of age at the time of their discharge. In 30 cases, no assistance was provided, notably if the children migrated outside the country, did not need support for their reintegration, died or were not traceable.

65. The Ministry of Education issued a nationwide directive for the unconditional enrolment of children formerly associated with the Tatmadaw in governmental schools. The Ministry of Health issued similar directives to public hospitals to ensure access to health care for reintegrated children.

66. During the reporting period, the Tatmadaw reported that it had trained 3,770 army officers, including border guard forces, on the Joint Action Plan. By the end of 2015, 18,699 members of the military had received training on the prevention of underage recruitment and the country task force had observed increased awareness on the part of soldiers regarding the issue during monitoring missions. During the reporting period, the country task force conducted 33 monitoring visits, covering 119 battalions, 7 training centres, 5 recruitment centres, 4 mobile recruitment units, 3 military detention centres and 11 border guard forces.

67. Progress in preventing underage recruitment was also advanced through the review and improvement of age assessment methodology in March 2015 with the

support of the United Nations. Procedures for age assessment were formulated to help screen out children during recruitment processes, identify children during Tatmadaw internal screenings and prevent underage recruits from being arrested or detained under charges of desertion.

68. In line with the conclusions of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict (S/AC.51/2013/2), the Government abolished military instruction 1/130/Yay 1 (Ka) of 1996, the "tenth standard exception", which allowed the Tatmadaw to recruit children who had passed the tenth standard examinations (usually around 16 years of age), in November 2013.

69. As of June 2014, military recruitment had shifted to a more centralized system, with recruitment at the battalion level being prohibited through a directive. This was an important step in accelerating progress on the Joint Action Plan. However, the country task force continued to document occasional cases of recruitment at the battalion level following the centralization.

70. In November 2013, the Government, the Tatmadaw and the country task force jointly launched a public awareness campaign to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Tatmadaw, which consisted of billboards, stickers, posters and TV/radio/newspaper advertisements for nationwide dissemination by the Government. All awareness materials included the number of the dedicated hotline of the country task force for reporting suspected cases of child recruitment. Billboards in each township were maintained; however, TV and radio spots ended in May 2014. The Tatmadaw reaffirmed its commitment to relaunch the nationwide campaign in 2016, and the campaign was relaunched in the second quarter of 2017.

71. Prosecuting civilian and military recruiters of children is crucial to ensure accountability and the sustainability of measures taken by the Tatmadaw to prevent future recruitment and use of children. The Tatmadaw has signalled its commitment to prosecute military personnel involved in such activities, including those found to have forged official documents, as provided for in national law. While the Government shared a list of 421 perpetrators (86 commissioned officers and 335 of other ranks) sanctioned with regard to recruitment during the period from July 2014 to December 2015, the link between specific cases and the exact sanctions taken is unclear. Concerning the prosecution of civilian brokers, the forthcoming adoption of the national child law, which contains specific provisions and punishments for civilian brokers, would be an important step in ensuring that a clear legislative framework is in place for prosecuting civilians who try to recruit children and hand them over to the Tatmadaw. However, accountability mechanisms for military personnel who have recruited or used children is an area where greater transparency and cooperation are needed. The adoption of a strong legal framework for civilian accountability is also required; the draft child law contains a section that will address that need once the law has been adopted by Parliament.

72. During the reporting period, the Government of Myanmar took several important steps to ratify or sign international commitments relating to child rights and child protection. In December 2013, Myanmar ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The International Labour Organization instrument calls for the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including the use of children in armed conflict. In September 2015, Myanmar signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Protocol is aimed at strengthening the protection of children from recruitment into the armed forces by, among other provisions, confirming 18 as the minimum age for compulsory recruitment into the armed forces. The Government has yet to ratify that instrument. In February 2017, the Government

of Myanmar signed the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles).

73. In December 2013, at the invitation of the Government of Myanmar, the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict conducted a four-day visit to Myanmar. The visit was aimed at reviewing progress in the implementation of the Joint Action Plan, assessing remaining challenges in addressing the situation of children in armed conflict in Myanmar, and interacting with relevant government ministries and child protection partners. The delegation noted the strong commitment of the Government to the implementation of the Joint Action Plan, but also highlighted key areas where further progress was needed to ensure full compliance. The Working Group also reaffirmed its commitment to support the Government in addressing grave violations against children and ending the recruitment and use of children.

74. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement continues to provide leadership by co-chairing the national Mine Risks Working Group, which comprises 10 ministries (including the Ministry of Defence) and 28 national and international non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, to enhance interministerial and inter-agency coordination on mitigation of the risks posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Four State-level mine risk working groups have been established, in Kachin, Kaya, Kayin and Shan States. In 2016, the participation of the Tatmadaw, KNU, KNLA-PC and the DKBA splinter group in meetings of mine risk working groups has increased and commitments to support the issues of landmines/explosive remnants of war have been clearly articulated. In addition, the splinter group, KNU and KNLA-PC engaged in mine risk education in March 2015. A common mine risk education toolkit was approved by the Government in 2016, and its roll-out in affected States and regions by teachers, Red Cross personnel, other government departments, community-based organizations and national and international non-governmental organizations has begun. As a result, in 2016 a total of 47,478 children (22,484 boys and 24,994 girls) received mine risk education.

Armed groups

75. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, during her visit in July 2015, engaged in dialogue with three listed armed groups to encourage the development of action plans to address the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations. The United Nations has pursued further dialogue with those groups, namely, KNU, KNLA, KNPP/KA and KIO/KIA, in addition to the DKBA splinter group. Subsequently, several armed groups took a series of concrete measures to prevent and reduce the impact of grave violations against children. In May 2016, KNU established a formal and direct advocacy channel between the country task force and its headquarters, so that incidents of grave violations against children involving KNLA could be addressed. In September 2016, the group held a two-day workshop in Myawaddy Township, Kayin State, with the country task force to discuss how to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. With regard to KNLA-PC and the DKBA splinter group, the country task force met with both groups and held a workshop on ending the recruitment and use of children on two separate occasions in July 2017.

76. One listed party, KNPP/KA, is ready to sign an action plan, while draft action plans are being formulated with KNU/KNLA (2016), KNLA-PC (2017) and the DKBA splinter group (2017). The Government of Myanmar, however, has not provided its consent to the country task force to sign the action plans with armed groups, pending the delisting of the Tatmadaw from my annual report. The signing and implementation of action plans with listed armed groups is a critical component

of the Government's larger commitment to end the recruitment and use of children throughout Myanmar, in line with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the commitment made by signing the Optional Protocol and the 2007 Paris Principles. It is my sincere hope that the Government will see its way to facilitating access to any armed group willing to engage in dialogue on the release of children from armed groups.

77. At the invitation of the Central Committee of KIO, the United Nations facilitated a workshop in Laiza in March 2016 on ending the recruitment and use of children and abduction of children by KIA. The workshop highlighted challenges in terms of supervision and accountability on the part of KIA soldiers during the recruitment process, as well as the lack of clear internal protocols for preventing child recruitment. The workshop also led to the establishment of a direct channel of communication between the country task force and KIA headquarters to address cases of grave violations against children involving KIA perpetrators. Following this event, a 17-year-old girl was the first child to be officially released by KIA, in May 2016. The girl had been forced to attend a 10-week military training session.

III. Observations and recommendations

78. I condemn the grave violations committed against children, particularly in Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States, including the recruitment and use, killing and maiming and abduction of children. The denial of access for humanitarian organizations to civilians, including children, also has had severe negative impacts on children. I call upon all parties to conflict in Myanmar to respect their obligations under international law and to put in place measures to end violations and prevent further ones.

79. In view of the fact that reported trends with respect to grave violations committed in the recent crisis in northern Rakhine State fall outside the reporting period, I recommend that my Special Representative update the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict by August 2018 on the situation in Myanmar for the period from July 2017 to June 2018.

80. Notwithstanding ongoing armed clashes in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar, I am encouraged by the continued peace process efforts under the new administration with a number of armed groups, including the three rounds of peace talks held in January and August 2016 and May 2017. I urge parties to include child protection issues, particularly the immediate separation of all children from all armed forces and groups, on the agenda of those talks.

81. I call on all parties to conflict to end restrictions placed on humanitarian organizations and to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need, in particular children. I also call on the parties to conflict to facilitate unfettered access for the United Nations to areas of concern for the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children and to engage with relevant parties to end such violations and prevent them from occurring in the future.

To the Government of Myanmar

82. I am encouraged by the progress achieved by the Government in implementing the Joint Action Plan during the reporting period, including through the centralization of recruitment within the armed forces, the release of more than 850 children, the provision of reintegration services for children released from the Tatmadaw and the training of more than 18,000 soldiers and officers on the prevention of underage recruitment. However, to avoid further prolongation of the full implementation of the

Action Plan and sustain positive momentum, I urge the Government to take the following steps without delay:

(a) Streamline the ongoing identification, registration and discharge of all children within the ranks of the Tatmadaw in coordination with the country task force on monitoring and reporting, including by reducing the often lengthy verification process prior to release;

(b) Put in place legal measures to better protect children from the effects of armed conflict by including explicit provisions in the draft child law related to the criminalization of recruitment by both military recruiters and civilian brokers, holding perpetrators of grave violations accountable for their actions through investigation and prosecution, and ensuring the protection of child victims;

(c) Immediately cease the arrest and imprisonment of children or adults who were recruited as minors, for desertion and/or attempting to leave the army, and ensure their swift and unconditional release;

(d) In the spirit of the Joint Action Plan of 2012 and relevant national and international legal instruments, review and amend any legislation to preclude the detention and/or prosecution of children on charges related to illegal association with armed groups;

(e) Facilitate continued timely and frequent access for the country task force on monitoring and reporting to military facilities, operational battalions and other areas where children may be present, including by allowing access to operational regiments and battalions, in addition to regional commands, recruitment units and training schools;

(f) Facilitate access for the country task force on monitoring and reporting to other listed parties in Myanmar to engage in dialogue with a view to developing action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to address other grave violations as appropriate, in line with the spirit of the Paris Principles and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

To armed groups

83. I urge all armed groups listed in the annexes to my annual report to immediately halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children and to release all children present in their ranks, in cooperation with the country task force on monitoring and reporting. Those parties are encouraged to enter into dialogue with the United Nations for the preparation and implementation of action plans to end child recruitment and use.

To the international community

84. I encourage the international donor community to provide financial resources to support the work of the United Nations in monitoring and reporting, facilitate the implementation of the Joint Action Plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Tatmadaw, engage with listed armed groups with a view to ending and preventing grave violations against children, and ensure that children separated from parties to conflict receive appropriate reintegration services.

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Security Council

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29 December 2017

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Letter dated 21 December 2017 from the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, containing an account of the Working Group's activities from 1 January to 31 December 2017. The report, which was approved by the Working Group, is being submitted in accordance with the note by the President of the Security Council of 29 March 1995 (S/1995/234).

I should be grateful if the present letter and the report were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Chair
Security Council Working Group on
Children and Armed Conflict

17-21611 (E) 291217

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Annual report of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005)

I. Introduction

1. The present report of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017.

2. During the reporting period, the Bureau of the Working Group consisted of Olof Skoog (Sweden) as Chair and the representative of Senegal as Vice-Chair.

II. Background

3. On 26 July 2005, the Security Council adopted resolution 1612 (2005), on children and armed conflict. In paragraph 8 of that resolution, the Council decided to establish a working group of the Council to review the reports of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, to review progress in the development and implementation of the action plans to halt recruitment and use of children in violation of international obligations and to consider other relevant information presented to it. The Council also decided that the working group should:

(a) Make recommendations to the Council on possible measures to promote the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including through recommendations on appropriate mandates for peacekeeping missions and recommendations with respect to the parties to the conflict;

(b) Address requests, as appropriate, to other bodies within the United Nations system for action to support the implementation of the resolution in accordance with their respective mandates.

4. On 2 May 2006, the Working Group adopted its terms of reference, which were subsequently published as a document of the Security Council (S/AC.51/2007/1). On 8 September of the same year, the Working Group adopted a list of options for possible actions ("toolkit") (S/AC.51/2007/2).

5. Pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has submitted annual reports to the Council on developments in relation to the Working Group since 2006.

III. Summary of the activities of the Working Group

6. During the reporting period, the Working Group held eight formal meetings, on 9 January, 14 February, 18 April, 2 May, 2 and 22 June, 3 August and 15 November, and met 11 times in informal consultations, in addition to conducting its work through written procedures and informal informal meetings.

7. At its 61st formal meeting, held on 9 January, the Working Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Colombia (S/2016/837), covering the period from September 2011 to June 2016. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict introduced the report, recalling its main conclusions, after which the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations presented the views of her Government on the report, which were later annexed to the conclusions on Colombia adopted by the

Working Group (see para. 8 below). In addition, a representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) presented the Secretary-General's global horizontal note covering the period from July to September 2016.

8. At its 62nd formal meeting, held on 14 February, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Colombia, on which the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations delivered a statement. Subsequently, the Special Representative introduced the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Somalia (S/2016/1098), covering the period from 1 April 2010 to 31 July 2016. The Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Somalia to the United Nations delivered a statement to the Working Group, which was later annexed to the conclusions on Somalia adopted by the Working Group (see para. 9 below).

9. At its 63rd formal meeting, held on 18 April, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Somalia, on which the Charge d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Somalia to the United Nations delivered a statement. Subsequently, the Special Representative introduced the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan (S/2017/191), covering the period from 1 March 2011 to 31 December 2016. The Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations delivered a statement to the Working Group, which was later annexed to the conclusions on the Sudan adopted by the Working Group (see para. 12 below).

10. At its 64th formal meeting, held on 2 May, the Working Group was briefed by videoconference on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Sudan by the Co-Chairs of the Sudan country task force on monitoring and reporting.

11. At its 65th formal meeting, held on 2 June, the Working Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Philippines (S/2017/294), covering the period from 1 December 2012 to 31 December 2016. The Special Representative introduced the report, recalling its main conclusions, after which the Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations presented the views of his Government on the report, which were later annexed to the conclusions on the Philippines adopted by the Working Group (see para. 13 below). The Special Representative then provided the Working Group with an update on the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for 2016.

12. At its 66th formal meeting, held on 22 June, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan, on which the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations delivered a statement. Subsequently, a representative of UNICEF presented the Secretary-General's global horizontal note covering the period from October to December 2016.

13. At its 67th formal meeting, held on 3 August, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Philippines (S/AC.51/2017/4), on which the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations delivered a statement. Subsequently, the Working Group discussed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria (S/2017/304), covering the period from January 2013 to December 2016. The Special Representative introduced the report, recalling its main conclusions, after which the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations delivered a statement, which was later annexed to the conclusions on Nigeria adopted by the Working Group (see para. 14 below). In addition, a representative of UNICEF presented the Secretary-General's global horizontal note covering the period from January to March 2017.

14. At its 68th formal meeting, held on 15 November, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria, on which the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations delivered a statement. Subsequently, a representative of UNICEF presented the Secretary-General's global horizontal note covering the period from April to June 2017.

15. On 5 May 2017, in accordance with paragraph 1 (c) of the note by the President of the Security Council on the work of the subsidiary organs of the Council (S/2016/170), a Security Council press release regarding the videoconference briefing on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Sudan was issued by the Co-Chairs of the Sudan country task force on monitoring and reporting. In addition, pursuant to the adoption of the aforementioned conclusions, the Working Group released five public statements as Security Council press releases, containing messages to all parties to the armed conflict, the Government, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army, the National Liberation Army and the post-demobilization groups in Colombia (dated 3 March 2017), to all parties to the armed conflict and community and religious leaders in Somalia (dated 30 June 2017), to all parties to the armed conflict in the Sudan (dated 1 August 2017), to all parties to the armed conflict, the Government, the leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the New People's Army and the Abu Sayyaf Group, and community leaders in the Philippines (dated 3 August 2017); and to all parties to the armed conflict, the Government, Boko Haram and the Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria (dated 15 November 2017).

16. In 2017, in direct relation to the conclusions adopted by the Working Group on the situation of children in Colombia, Somalia, the Sudan, the Philippines and Nigeria, respectively, the Working Group sent 109 communications to 48 Member States and other stakeholders.

17. Upon the invitation of the Government of the Sudan, the Working Group visited the Sudan, from 26 to 29 November. The delegation was composed of nine members of the Security Council: Egypt, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America and Sweden as Chair of the Working Group. The goals of the visit were: (a) to engage in advocacy on the basis of the conclusions on children and armed conflict in the Sudan, adopted by the Working Group in 2017 (S/AC.51/2017/3); (b) to assess progress and challenges in the implementation of the action plans signed by the parties to the conflict in the Sudan, including the action plan signed by the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations; (c) to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the country task force on monitoring and reporting in the implementation of the Security Council mandate on children and armed conflict in the Sudan; and (d) to gain first-hand insight, including through a field visit, into the impact of the conflict on children and the role that the Working Group can play in addressing the situation. The delegation visited Khartoum and El Fasher in North Darfur and met with various senior United Nations and government officials, as well as with the United Nations country team and representatives of non-governmental organizations working in the protection sector and of the international community.

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Security Council

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Letter dated 22 December 2017 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, I have the honour to attach herewith two documents containing, respectively, a report on the activities and achievements of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate during the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2017 (annex I) and a note by the Executive Director of the Executive Directorate containing observations and recommendations on the Directorate's future work (annex II).

The documents are submitted for the consideration of the Council within the framework of its forthcoming review of the mandate of the Executive Directorate, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Security Council resolution 2129 (2013).

I would be grateful if this letter and its annexes could be brought to the attention of the members of the Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Amr Abdellatif **Aboulatta**
Chair
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism

17-23231 (E) 110118

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Annex I

Report of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate on the activities and achievements of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Executive Directorate during the period 2014–2017

I. Introduction

1. The Security Council, in its resolution 2129 (2013), decided that the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate would continue to operate as a special political mission under the policy guidance of the Committee for the period ending 31 December 2017. The work programme of the Committee for 2017 (S/2017/176, enclosure) provides that on the basis of information provided by the Executive Directorate, the Committee will submit to the Security Council a report on the Executive Directorate's work for consideration by the Council in the context of the renewal of the mandate of the Executive Directorate and that, in accordance with Council resolution 2129 (2013), the report will be submitted to the Council prior to the expiration of the Executive Directorate's mandate on 31 December 2017.

2. The present report describes the activities and achievements of the Committee and the Executive Directorate during the period 2014–2017, with a particular focus on the elements specifically identified in resolution 2129 (2013) and subsequent resolutions and decisions of the Council.

3. Michèle Coninsx of Belgium was appointed Executive Director of the Executive Directorate on 11 August 2017 and assumed her duties on 2 November 2017. Ms. Coninsx succeeded Jean-Paul Laborde of France, who served as Executive Director from 22 July 2013 to 31 July 2017.

4. The Executive Directorate trusts that the present report will be of assistance to the Committee in its work to advise the Council within the framework of the renewal of the mandate of the Directorate.

II. Overview of the global terrorism threat and the response of Member States

5. Terrorism continues to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. Over recent years, the global security landscape has become significantly more complex, volatile and challenging, as terrorists and terrorist organizations and their affiliates and cells continue to adapt their tactics and methods. Member States continued to introduce measures to address those risks and challenges, but many continue to require technical assistance in their efforts to achieve effective implementation of the relevant Council resolutions on terrorism and the 19 international counter-terrorism instruments.

6. Since 2014, the emergence of new terrorist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) and the related foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon has significantly exacerbated existing political and security challenges in some of the world's most vulnerable regions. Even though travel by foreign terrorist fighters to conflict zones is not a new phenomenon, the recent flow of such fighters to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic was unprecedented. The global threat has been further compounded by the return of foreign terrorist fighters to their countries of origin or residence and their relocation to third States.

7. Terrorist groups have increasingly urged their supporters to carry out attacks in the name of the group, wherever they are located and using any means available to

them. Most such attacks are directed at poorly protected civilian targets (so-called soft targets). ISIL, in particular, has developed a model by which "lone" attackers, who may be completely unknown to the authorities, can be directly guided and instructed by operatives using encrypted messaging services. This has resulted in the expansion of the terrorist threat to previously less affected areas, as well as an increase in the number of terrorist plots resulting in fatalities. Despite this trend towards online radicalization and recruitment, however, the continued threat posed by offline activity should not be minimized.

8. In addition to calling for terrorist attacks on an international scale, terrorist organizations, including ISIL and Al-Qaida, have compensated for their territorial losses by expanding their presence to new areas. The links between terrorism and transnational organized crime have exacerbated conflicts, increased opportunities for smuggling and trafficking in weapons, illicit goods and human beings, and expanded opportunities for terrorism financing. Terrorist organizations have also continued to recruit, operationalize and victimize women and children, including by using them as fighters.

9. Member States have made considerable progress in their efforts to review, amend and update their national legislation so as to strengthen their capacities to bring terrorists to justice while protecting and promoting international law, in particular international human rights and humanitarian law. United Nations offices have provided States identified by the Executive Directorate as requiring technical assistance in this area with the training and resources required to ensure that their criminal justice systems are capable of handling complex cases relating to terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters. Nevertheless, legislative gaps remain in many parts of the world and global legislative disparities continue to impede international cooperation. Despite the challenges involved, some States have worked to strengthen international judicial and law enforcement cooperation by designating central authorities for mutual legal assistance and extradition, nominating focal points that operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, on matters relating to foreign terrorist fighters, or downgrading intelligence for use by frontline officers and sharing intelligence, as appropriate. Some States have made notable progress in their efforts to develop and implement comprehensive and effective prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. Within the framework of their anti-money-laundering and counter-financing of terrorism regimes, many States are taking steps to strengthen their financial investigation capacity and to ensure that law enforcement agencies are provided with adequate and timely access to national and international information-sharing mechanisms.

10. More and more States are taking a holistic approach, by developing strategies and policies that address the conditions conducive to terrorism and by taking preventive measures that involve many sectors of society. However, the adoption of such an approach presents a new set of challenges. The need to counter incitement and violent extremism and to take full account of the rights of victims of terrorism presents further challenges. The relationship between security and development (as reflected, for example, in concerns over the protection of tourist infrastructure) also requires increased attention. Lastly, the international obligation to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law in countering terrorism continues to present challenges. In particular, States are confronted with decisions regarding how to safeguard their societies within the framework provided by international human rights law and, where special counter-terrorism measures are contemplated, how to ensure that they are undertaken in strict compliance with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, and without discrimination.

III. Monitoring, promoting and facilitating implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014)

A. Assessment of implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) by Member States

11. Assessment of counter-terrorism measures taken by Member States remains the primary tool of the Committee and the Executive Directorate in their efforts to monitor progress achieved at the national, regional and global levels in the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions. The assessment process, which consists of on-site assessment visits, consultation, constructive dialogue and analysis, facilitates the identification of remaining gaps, areas in which States may require technical assistance and good and effective practices.

B. Assessment visits to Member States on behalf of the Committee

12. During the period under review, the Executive Directorate conducted 53 visits to Member States in all five United Nations regional groups, bringing the total number of visits and follow-up visits conducted since 2005 to 136 and the total number of States visited to 98. The assessment visits enable the Directorate to gather information about the current threat level in the visited State and the measures taken to address it. They also help to strengthen coordination and collaboration at the national level by facilitating dialogue among key national stakeholders. During the period under review, the Directorate was able to assess implementation by Member States of recently adopted Council resolutions on terrorism, as well as to identify a number of new trends and common challenges.

13. The Executive Directorate continued to invite experts from a broad range of United Nations entities and international and regional organizations[1] to participate in the visits, with a view to enhancing the assessment of matters within their expertise and facilitating cooperation among key international stakeholders within the framework of delivery of technical assistance to counter terrorism.

14. The visits also enable the visited State to demonstrate its political will to engage in dialogue with the Committee, as well as its readiness to facilitate the Committee's assessment of its national counter-terrorism measures. The demonstration by Member States of political will also facilitates the subsequent implementation of the recommendations contained in the Committee's report of the visit, whether by the visited State, donor States or technical assistance providers, as well as the sharing of identified good and effective practices with other States.

[1] Including Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, Expert Group of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States, Economic Community of West African States, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), International Organization for Migration, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, regional anti-terrorist structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, World Bank, World Customs Organization and Financial Action Task Force-style regional bodies.

C. Stocktaking of implementation by Member States of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and successor resolutions

15. Interaction, dialogue and analysis are also central to the efforts of the Executive Directorate to monitor, promote and facilitate implementation by Member States of Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005). This is especially the case in the absence of a scheduled visit or in the absence of consent to receive a visit. They also help to ensure sustained dialogue between the Committee and Member States, including on progress made in implementing the Committee's recommendations following the visit. The Committee's revised assessment tools (the overview of implementation assessment and the detailed implementation survey) continue to assist the Committee and the Directorate to maintain and strengthen their constructive dialogue with Member States and to provide a mechanism for inquiring about measures introduced pursuant to Council resolution 2178 (2014). These tools are designed to ensure thoroughness, consistency, transparency and even-handedness in the Committee's stocktaking process.

16. During the period from 1 September 2013 to 30 September 2017, the Committee approved 63 overview of implementation assessments and 63 detailed implementation surveys of implementation by Member States of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005).

17. In 2016, with a view to facilitating implementation by Member States of the asset-freezing provisions set forth in resolution 1373 (2001), particularly its provisions on third-party requests for freezing of assets, the Executive Directorate developed a database of contacts for national agencies responsible for handling such requests.

IV. Facilitation of technical assistance delivery

18. Facilitation of delivery of technical assistance is one of the core tasks assigned by the Security Council to the Committee and the Executive Directorate. In this regard, the Directorate has taken a number of steps to strengthen its facilitation efforts on the Committee's behalf, including: (a) according priority to States visited by the Committee, focusing on follow-up requests and arranging timely round tables with implementing partners and donors; (b) working with both long-standing and new implementing partners and donor States and organizations to facilitate the provision of assistance; (c) bringing the role of the Committee fully into play in making technical assistance referrals; (d) participating actively in the working groups of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and its Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism Initiative; (e) identifying common challenges and facilitating the delivery of regional or global technical assistance programmes to address them; (f) integrating the human rights and rule of law-based approach into all its activities; (g) establishing working relations with the Global Counterterrorism Forum; and (h) exploring further ways to engage with the private sector in support of efforts by donor Governments to deliver technical assistance.

19. Pursuant to the country visits, a number of technical assistance activities were facilitated in a range of thematic areas, including national counter-terrorism strategies, legislative drafting and implementation, countering violent extremism and countering the financing of terrorism. The assessment process was enhanced by the dissemination of technical assistance referrals to implementing entities of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and by engagement with international and regional partners concerning visit findings and follow-up action plans. Pursuant to Council resolution 2129 (2013), the Executive Directorate continued to explore

with other United Nations agencies and implementing partners ways to effectively assess the impact of donor-supported project activities linked to capacity-building and cooperation.

V. Regional activities of the Executive Directorate

A. Americas, the Caribbean, Asia, Oceania and the Pacific

20. Effective international and regional cooperation is essential to countering terrorism. In this regard, the Executive Directorate has notably worked to assist the Member States of South Asia[2] to develop new forms of regional cooperation in the area of criminal justice. Over the past nine years, more than 300 judges, prosecutors and police officers have gathered at regular workshops for practitioners to discuss emerging issues, trends and developments, the challenges they face in handling complex terrorism cases, and ways to strengthen their cooperation. The facilitation of opportunities for practitioners to share experiences, lessons learned and good practices is a crucial element of the Directorate's assessment work. It also informs the Directorate's work at the wider level, including within the framework of technical assistance delivery. In March 2016, the Directorate facilitated an open briefing delivered by the Committee to supreme court justices of South Asia on the theme "Terrorism, the rule of law and the role of judges". The open briefing was attended by the Supreme Court Justices of France, Israel, Lebanon, Tunisia and the United States of America, and marked the first occasion on which supreme court justices had attended a meeting at the United Nations. The Directorate also worked to strengthen interregional cooperation by facilitating engagement between law enforcement agencies of South-East Asia and of South-Eastern Europe. A notable outcome of this work was the signing of a memorandum of understanding by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Association of Heads of Police and the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center.

B. Europe, Middle East and Central Asia

21. In Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, as in other regions, the Executive Directorate continued to encourage States to address the challenges posed by terrorism, including the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, in a comprehensive and integrated manner. In conducting assessment visits to the region, the Directorate regularly engaged with regional bodies, including the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In its dialogue with Member States of the region, the Directorate continued to promote the adoption of comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategies and to compile and share related good practices.

22. One notable example in this regard was the follow-up to the Committee's 2015 assessment visit to Iraq. Following the visit, the Executive Directorate rapidly shared Iraq's priority technical assistance needs with implementing partners and donors at informal meetings held in New York and Baghdad. The Directorate also established a bilateral coordination mechanism with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in Baghdad with a view to establishing a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, communications channel and enabling UNAMI to represent the Directorate with Iraq's counter-terrorism focal point in Baghdad. Subsequently, UNAMI itself appointed a counter-terrorism focal point in Baghdad to act as liaison with the

[2] Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Directorate. The informal meetings with implementing agencies and the donor community proved to be especially useful in expediting follow-up.

23. The Executive Directorate continued to strengthen its cooperation with the European Union and its various constituent entities, including the European External Action Service, the European Police Office (Europol) and Eurojust. In March 2017, the Directorate briefed the Committee on progress made by Western European States in implementing resolution 2178 (2014). It also played an influential role in supporting the drafting, adoption and entry into force of the 2015 Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, which transposes resolution 2178 (2014) into a regional treaty. In the area of border management, the Directorate's engagement with the European Parliament helped to galvanize the debate on passenger name records, culminating in the adoption of a directive on that topic in April 2016. In accordance with resolution 2129 (2013), the Directorate also advocated for the adoption of comprehensive national and regional counter-terrorism strategies and continued to compile and share good practices in that area.

24. In order to draw the Committee's attention to the specific challenges relating to countering terrorism and violent extremism in Central Asia, the Executive Directorate organized a meeting in June 2015 of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Committee with the representatives of all five Central Asian States. By the end of 2017, the Directorate will have conducted assessment visits to all five States of the region. These visits have yielded a wealth of information on the counter-terrorism capacities and technical assistance needs of these States. The Directorate remained actively engaged with the region to raise the awareness of Member States and to support their efforts to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters.

25. The Executive Directorate prepared regional assessment reports and recommended priority measures to be taken by Central Asian States, including on the development or revision of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism strategies based on a comprehensive approach which involves all relevant stakeholders and addresses conditions that are conducive to terrorism. With the support of the Eurasian Group on Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, all five States have introduced criminal liability for terrorism financing in a manner that is largely compliant with the requirements of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and the relevant recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The five States have also made considerable progress in their efforts to comply with the requirement to freeze terrorist funds without delay. Mindful that all five States face challenges in tackling terrorist propaganda disseminated through information and communications technology (ICT), the Directorate facilitated several regional and national initiatives on that topic, including with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the ICT for Peace Foundation.

C. Africa

26. Acting on behalf of the Committee, the Executive Directorate conducted a number of country visits to Africa, including a visit to Mali within the framework of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism Initiative for Mali aimed at assisting in the development of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy, and a visit to the Lake Chad basin with the participation of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for West Africa and for Central Africa, aimed at assisting the States of the region to develop approaches to prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating persons associated with Boko Haram in accordance with Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 2178 (2014) and 2349 (2017). Acting within the framework of the partnership among Nigeria, the

European Union, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Executive Directorate, the Directorate was able to provide support to Nigeria, including by facilitating in June 2017 a national inter-agency workshop on developing a prosecution strategy for terrorism-related cases involving persons associated with Boko Haram.

27. The Committee's advocacy visits to Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana served to raise awareness of the potential terrorist threat, discuss the level of preparedness required to deal with the threat and identify immediate technical assistance needs to be brought to the attention of technical assistance providers. The findings of the visit to Burkina Faso were included in the report on the consultative mission of the inter-agency working group on sustaining peace in Burkina Faso, in which the Executive Directorate participated. The mission resulted in the development of an integrated strategic framework for sustaining peace in Burkina Faso.

28. During the period under review, the Executive Directorate participated in several inter-agency task forces on Africa, led by the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat. Participation in the task forces provided a valuable opportunity for the Directorate to promote the international counter-terrorism framework and engage the wider United Nations in its activities. The Directorate also joined the Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration to provide strategic advice and substantive support for the revision of the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards, which includes guidance on the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in contexts involving terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council.

VI. Global survey of the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001)

29. Pursuant to the request of the Council contained in its resolution 2129 (2013), the Executive Directorate updated the September 2011 global implementation survey of the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) by Member States (S/2011/463, annex). In accordance with paragraph 6 of the resolution, the updated survey was brought to the attention of the Committee and issued as a document of the Council on 20 January 2016 (S/2016/49, annex). The updated survey incorporates data gathered from a wide range of sources, including the Committee's visit reports, data gathered by the Directorate within the framework of its ongoing dialogue with States, regional workshops and information provided by United Nations entities and international, regional and subregional organizations.

30. The survey focuses on the major thematic areas addressed by the Council in resolution 1373 (2001), including counter-terrorism legislation, countering the financing of terrorism, law enforcement, border control and international cooperation. It identifies common challenges faced by States in all regions of the world, provides priority recommendations on ways to address them and assesses the progress made by States in implementing the resolution, as well as the remaining challenges. The survey also takes into account the protection of human rights, as required by the resolution. The sections on law enforcement and border control were expanded to reflect additional assessment criteria identified by experts from the Executive Directorate. The survey's findings notably assist the Directorate's implementing partners in their development of regional capacity-building programmes.

31. The updated survey identifies four key issues, trends and developments that have emerged since 2011: (a) the emergence of the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters; (b) the role of women in terrorism and the prevention of terrorism; (c) the particular problems associated with children and adolescents in the terrorist

environment; and (d) issues and trends associated with the increasing use by terrorists of ICT, including the Internet and social media, for terrorist purposes.

VII. Implementation of resolutions 1624 (2005) and 2354 (2017)

32. The Executive Directorate continued to pay close attention to implementation by Member States of Council resolution 1624 (2005) on prohibiting, preventing and countering incitement to commit acts of terrorism, within the framework of its assessment activities and in the context of several initiatives aimed at promoting the resolution's implementation. Mindful of the linkages between resolutions 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014), the Executive Directorate also supported efforts by Member States to counter incitement and violent extremism, through engagement with a broad range of actors, including youth, families, women, civil society organizations and religious, cultural and educational leaders. The Directorate facilitated national and regional workshops in partnership with others on those issues, including in Africa and Asia. The main objective of the workshops was to demonstrate the need for a comprehensive approach that combines law enforcement measures with other steps, including measures to enhance dialogue, broaden understanding and promote tolerance and coexistence. The workshops also stressed the importance of taking into account conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and the need to integrate the gender perspective into measures to counter incitement and violent extremism.

33. The Executive Directorate also began work on the challenge of countering terrorist narratives. Security Council resolution 2354 (2017) endorsed a proposal by the Directorate to develop a comprehensive international framework, with recommended guidelines and good practices, to effectively counter terrorist narratives (S/2017/375, annex). The framework consists of three elements: (a) the implementation of related legal and law enforcement measures in accordance with international law; (b) the development of public-private partnerships; and (c) the development of counter-narratives. Pursuant to Council resolution 2354 (2017), the Committee and the Directorate are working to facilitate international cooperation to implement the framework and to identify and compile existing good practices in countering terrorist narratives, acting in coordination with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Working Group on Communications. The Directorate submitted to the Committee a workplan to support the implementation of resolution 2354 (2017).

34. In its resolution 2129 (2013), the Council requested the Executive Directorate to submit to the Committee, in accordance with resolution 1963 (2010), global surveys of implementation by Member States of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) and directed the Directorate to produce updated versions of the surveys. In this regard, the Directorate completed the second global survey on the implementation of resolution 1624 (2005), which was issued as a document of the Council (S/2016/50, annex). The updated survey addresses relevant human rights issues and the challenges posed by incitement through the Internet and other ICT. It also includes an overview of innovative approaches for enhanced implementation of the resolution, including to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters to conflict zones in accordance with Council resolution 2178 (2014).

35. The survey was updated on the basis of information gathered from a wide range of sources, including information contained in the Committee's visit reports, information gathered by the Executive Directorate within the framework of its ongoing dialogue with Member States outside the context of country visits, and reports by Member States on their implementation of resolution 1624 (2005).

VIII. Implementation of resolution 2178 (2014) by States affected by foreign terrorist fighters and emerging challenges

36. Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, requires Member States to take a number of additional measures to combat the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and to counter violent extremism, and called on the Executive Directorate to assist States in those efforts. Pursuant to the resolution, the presidential statement issued by the Council on 19 November 2014 (S/PRST/2014/23) and the framework document for action by the Directorate on resolution 2178 (2014), the Directorate engaged in a number of activities to monitor, facilitate and promote implementation of the resolution by Member States.

37. In July 2015, the Committee held a special meeting in Madrid with Member States and relevant international and regional organizations on the theme "Stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters". The outcomes of the meeting include the conclusions of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (S/2015/939, annex I) and a set of guiding principles for stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters (ibid., annex II). The guiding principles notably advise States to utilize nationally, regionally and internationally sourced information and databases, especially those of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and to share information on foreign terrorist fighters. States are also called upon to transmit advance passenger information and passenger name records prior to the departure or arrival of passengers, in compliance with established standards and guidelines. The principles also provide guidance on prosecution strategies and advise that, in cases relating to foreign terrorist fighters, national criminal systems should ensure the admissibility in court of evidence collected from the Internet or through the use of special investigative techniques.

38. The Executive Directorate also submitted to the Council three reports on implementation by Member States of resolution 2178 (2014). The first report, issued in May 2015 (S/2015/338, annex), contained a preliminary assessment of an initial 21 Member States, based on a thematic approach. The second report, issued in September 2015 (S/2015/683, annex), considered a further 32 States, based on a predominantly regional approach. The third report, issued in December 2015 (S/2015/975, annex), employed a risk-based approach across seven additional subregions. It also included regional and thematic recommendations for 77 States identified by the Directorate as most affected by the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters.

39. The Executive Directorate participated in a number of events relating to foreign terrorist fighters and activities around the world to raise awareness of the requirements of resolution 2178 (2014) and the related activities of the Council, the Committee and the Executive Directorate. On the basis of its assessments, and pursuant to the presidential statement issued by the Council on 29 May 2015 (S/PRST/2015/11), the Executive Directorate made substantive contributions to the development of the United Nations capacity-building implementation plan for countering the flow of foreign terrorist fighters by identifying the main themes and regions to be addressed, including the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters who return to their countries of origin or relocate to third countries. In this regard, the Directorate and the Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) also prepared a joint assessment of the impact of resolution 2178 (2014).

40. In its resolution 2178 (2014), the Council calls on States to take a number of measures to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, including introducing an

advance passenger information system and utilizing passenger name records. However, only 50 States have thus far introduced an advance passenger information system. Consequently, the majority of Member States are currently unable to verify the presence of foreign terrorist fighters on board aircraft flying into, transiting through or departing from their airports. This represents a significant global security threat, which must be addressed as a matter of priority. The Executive Directorate worked closely with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to develop an international standard, under annex 9 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, requiring all ICAO members to implement an advance passenger information system. The Directorate also initiated and led four advance passenger information in depth missions to high-priority States, funded by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, to advise on the development of an advance passenger information system.

41. In its resolution 2322 (2016), the Council calls on States to share biometric and biographical information. There is a need for all relevant actors, including the United Nations, to strengthen awareness and knowledge of biometrics and the related work of the United Nations and relevant international entities and to promote the collection, recording and sharing of biometric information. Within the framework of the Committee's special meeting on the theme "International judicial and law enforcement cooperation in counter-terrorism matters", held in June 2017, the Executive Directorate organized a session on the sharing of biometric and biographic information. The Directorate will launch a project, within the framework of the Task Force Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement relating to Counter-Terrorism, for the development of a compendium of existing good and recommended practices on the responsible use and sharing of biometrics in identifying terrorists, including key principles and measures to be taken into account at the national level.

42. The compendium will be utilized within the framework of the Committee's country assessment visits, as well as for awareness-raising purposes. The Executive Directorate participated in the Congress of the Biometrics Institute in November 2017 and engaged with biometrics experts from Member States and private sector actors engaged in the development of biometric technologies. The Directorate also continued to promote the use of the relevant INTERPOL databases, including its database of facial images, and continued to support the development and implementation of the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme strategy, which addresses biometric verification processes, quality control, management of errors and exceptions, and effective reading of biometric travel documents at the border.

43. Returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters present an acute and evolving threat to international peace and security. Upon their return to their States of origin or residence, or relocation to third States, they may use the training, experience, connections and credibility obtained in conflict zones to help expand terrorist networks through radicalization, recruitment and incitement, train others, engage in terrorism financing, facilitate the travel of other foreign terrorist fighters or engage in the planning or commission of attacks.

44. The Committee and the Executive Directorate continued to work with other United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia to assist States in their efforts to address the challenges that arise when foreign terrorist fighters return or relocate to their countries, including by providing analysis and guidance on ways to ensure that prisons systematically support disengagement, as well as on the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters.

45. One notable example in this regard was engagement by the Executive Directorate with Nigeria within the framework of the partnership among Nigeria, the European Union, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Executive Directorate on developing approaches to prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating persons associated with Boko Haram in accordance with Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 2178 (2014) and 2349 (2017). In June 2017, the Executive Directorate held a national inter-agency workshop on developing a prosecution strategy for terrorism-related cases concerning persons associated with Boko Haram. The workshop built upon the December 2016 working-level and high-level consultations on prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating persons associated with Boko Haram, facilitated by the Directorate at the request of Nigeria's Office of the National Security Adviser. The workshop participants endorsed a set of 17 action points containing clear goals for an approach that: (a) prioritizes prosecution criteria and the capacity of the criminal justice system, as part of any strategy; (b) ensures transparency, coherence and predictability through the development of a legal framework; and (c) provides sustainable resources at the federal and state levels and is mindful of competing resource requests concerning the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, internally displaced persons and refugees. The approach also takes into account a number of specific concerns, including concerns relating to women and children. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in close consultation with the Directorate, is expected to engage in additional related activities in Chad and the Niger in late 2017 and early 2018.

IX. Activities pursuant to recently adopted Council resolutions on terrorism

46. Since the previous mandate renewal review, the Council has adopted resolutions 2133 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2185 (2014), 2195 (2014), 2220 (2015), 2242 (2015), 2253 (2015), 2309 (2016), 2322 (2016), 2331 (2016), 2341 (2017), 2354 (2017), 2368 (2017), 2370 (2017) and 2388 (2017). These resolutions confer a number of new tasks upon the Executive Directorate, including the preparation of in-depth assessments and analysis in a wide variety of thematic areas, which require new expertise.

47. Those thematic areas include, inter alia, the links between transnational organized crime and terrorism, foreign terrorist fighters, policing, terrorist threats to civil aviation, threats posed by terrorists' access to weapons and the supply and trafficking of weapons to terrorists, gender issues in counter-terrorism, preventing and suppressing the financing of terrorist groups, including ISIL, Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, kidnapping for ransom, prosecution, rehabilitation and integration, promoting international law enforcement and judicial cooperation in counter-terrorism matters, the use of biometrics, the downgrading of intelligence for use by frontline officers, trafficking in persons for terrorist purposes, protection of critical infrastructure, countering terrorist narratives, the use of digital and battlefield evidence, new border-control measures (including advance passenger information and biometrics), use of the Internet for terrorist purposes, preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons, and links between human trafficking and financing of terrorism.

48. One example of engagement by the Executive Directorate pursuant to recently adopted Council resolutions is the report prepared pursuant to paragraph 21 of resolution 2322 (2016) on the current state of international law enforcement and judicial cooperation related to terrorism. Prepared with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and in consultation with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office, the report identifies major gaps in international

cooperation and provides targeted recommendations on ways to address them. A summary of the report was presented at the Committee's meeting of 26 October 2017.

X. Updating of the technical guide to the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions

49. Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1535 (2004), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014) require the Executive Directorate to assist the Committee in its efforts to monitor implementation by States of Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014). In this regard, the Committee requested the Directorate to update its 2009 technical guide, which had been welcomed and accepted by the Committee as a reference tool for use during visits conducted on the Committee's behalf.

50. The guide addresses each paragraph of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) and also identifies key provisions of resolution 2178 (2014). It also takes into account the requirements set forth in resolutions 2129 (2013), 2133 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2195 (2014), 2220 (2015), 2242 (2015), 2253 (2015), 2309 (2016), 2322 (2016), 2331 (2016), 2341 (2017) and 2354 (2017) in order to reflect the additional elements of those resolutions.

51. The updated technical guide fully reflects the mainstreaming of gender, ICT, human rights, countering violent extremism, terrorism financing and implementation of resolution 1624 (2005) into all the Executive Directorate's work. It utilizes previously agreed language of the Committee, deepens the analysis of the thematic areas covered, references documents previously approved by the Committee (such as the detailed implementation surveys, the guiding principles for stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, the Committee's policy guidance, the findings of the Directorate's reports on foreign terrorist fighters and selected products from the Global Counterterrorism Forum). The updated version also includes 14 new sections and four new chapters on issues relating to terrorism financing, ICT, border control, criminal justice, human rights, gender, law enforcement, countering violent extremism, Council resolution 1624 (2005) and international cooperation. The English-language version has been submitted by the Committee to the Council and the guide will be translated into the other five official languages of the United Nations by January 2018.

XI. Streamlining of work procedures

52. The Committee, with the support of the Executive Directorate, introduced further expedited working procedures, including the adoption of files of Member States through the no-objection procedure on a case-by-case basis, aimed at keeping pace with the evolving counter-terrorism situation and addressing terrorism-related issues in a timely manner. On 3 June 2015, the Committee adapted the semi-annual report by the Directorate to make it an annual report. These procedures helped to streamline the Directorate's working methods and enabled it to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth end-of-year assessment of new terrorist threats, trends, issues, challenges and good practices. The Directorate also continued to update the Committee on its activities through the submission of monthly reports. Together with the Committee secretariat, the Directorate continued to assist the Committee to streamline its procedures in order to promote greater transparency and efficiency.

XII. Special meetings, open briefings and other events

53. Pursuant to Council resolutions 2129 (2013) and 2133 (2014), as well as to other resolutions and decisions of the Council, the Committee, with the assistance of the Executive Directorate, held 38 special meetings, events and open briefings of the Committee during the period from September 2013 to December 2017.

54. From 2013 to 2017, the Committee held special meetings on the following topics: enhancing cooperation and technical assistance to States in the Sahel region to strengthen their capacity in the global fight against terrorism (20 September 2013); kidnapping for ransom and hostage-taking committed by terrorist groups (24 November 2014); stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters (27 and 28 July 2015); preventing terrorists from exploiting the Internet and social media to recruit terrorists and incite terrorist acts, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms (two meetings, on 16 and 17 December 2015 and on 30 November and 1 December 2016); depriving terrorist groups from accessing, raising and moving funds: practices and lessons learned, held pursuant to resolution 2253 (2015) jointly with the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) and FATF (12 and 13 December 2016); international judicial and law enforcement cooperation in counter-terrorism matters pursuant to Security Council resolution 2322 (2016) and other relevant Council resolutions (20 and 21 June 2017); and terrorist threats to civil aviation (6 and 7 July 2017).

55. Open briefings, meetings, round tables and other events were held by the Committee on the following topics: preventing terrorists' misuse of travel documents and terrorism prevention activities (25 April 2014); protection of critical tourism infrastructure (12 June 2014); countering incitement to commit terrorist acts motivated by extremism and intolerance: Morocco's approach and the experiences of other African States (30 September 2014); the importance of the rule of law in countering the current terrorist threat, with the Minister of Justice of France, Christiane Taubira (10 February 2015); the use of advance passenger information to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters (11 June 2015); strengthening emergency responses in the aftermath of terrorist incidents (16 June 2015); new initiatives to address the foreign terrorist fighter challenge, with the Council of Europe (19 June 2015); the role of education in countering terrorism, incitement and violent extremism, with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation (24 July 2014); the role of women in countering terrorism (9 September 2015); and commemorating the tenth anniversary of resolution 1624 (2005) (14 September 2015).

56. In 2016 and 2017, the Committee held meetings on the following topics: the effective adjudication of terrorism cases (10 March 2016); countering the financing of terrorism and depriving terrorist groups, particularly Al-Qaida, ISIL (Da'esh) and their affiliates, from their sources of funding, jointly with FATF and the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) (14 April 2016); the implementation of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) and the Madrid guiding principles as a practical tool for Member States to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters (22 July 2016); enhancing counter-terrorism international cooperation, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (12 December 2016); terrorist financing through the misuse of social media platforms to raise and move funds (13 December 2016); the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon in Western Europe (closed meeting, 27 March 2017); denying safe haven to those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist acts or provide safe havens and preventing terrorists from abusing the asylum system, in conformity with international law (5 April 2017); preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons (17 May 2017); Iraq technical assistance follow-up (31 May 2017); Libya (27 June 2017); West Africa (27 June 2017); developing national and regional comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies (lessons learned)

(31 October 2017); legal issues and challenges to the treatment and prosecution of returning foreign terrorist fighters, including emerging issues (8 November 2017); open meeting with academic institutions and think tanks (continuation of meeting of November 2015) (16 November 2017); Afghanistan: technical assistance identification (28 November); Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate technical guide (20 November 2017); and launch of the Tech against Terrorism knowledge-sharing platform (29 November 2017).

57. These events were open to Member States and international and regional organizations and served as useful platforms for the timely exchange of information on new and emerging trends, threats and challenges, interaction among stakeholders, sharing of good practices, discussion of capacity-building needs, planning of technical assistance programmes and raising the visibility of the work of the Committee and the Executive Directorate. The special meeting on international judicial and law enforcement cooperation in counter-terrorism matters, held on 20 and 21 June 2017, involved 36 international and regional organizations and academic entities.

58. These events also enable the Committee to raise the awareness of Member States and relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, exchange information on key gaps and challenges, mobilize support to implement the relevant Council resolutions and obtain updated information on international efforts to implement the resolutions.

XIII. Development of regional and thematic issues

59. Pursuant to paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 1963 (2010) and paragraph 22 of resolution 2129 (2013), the Executive Directorate gave a series of briefings to the Committee on regional and thematic issues of relevance to the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions, with the participation of New York based United Nations entities and organizations. The Chair of the Committee arranged for similar public briefings by the Directorate for the wider membership. These arrangements and discussions helped the Committee not only to raise awareness of its strategic and transparent approaches, but also to raise the visibility of its work and maintain its link and dialogue with the wider membership.

60. In July 2014, the Executive Directorate briefed the Committee on specific challenges relating to countering terrorism and violent extremism in Central Asia. In June 2015, the Directorate organized a meeting with the Chair of the Committee and the representatives of all five Central Asian States to discuss the Committee's dialogue with those States on their implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014). By the end of 2017, the Directorate will have conducted assessment visits to all five States of the region. This process has produced a wealth of updated information on States' counter-terrorism capacities and technical assistance needs. The Directorate also continues to work with its regional implementing partners and to support regional initiatives, in close cooperation with its partners.

XIV. Development of comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies and mechanisms to implement them

61. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of Council resolution 1963 (2010) and paragraph 18 of Council resolution 2129 (2013), the Executive Directorate continued its dialogue with Member States aimed at advising them, as appropriate, on the development of

comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies and the introduction of implementing mechanisms that include attention to the factors that lead to terrorist activities. In doing so, the Directorate continued its close cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, in particular through its Working Group on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies, which is co-chaired by the Directorate and the Office of Counter-Terrorism. A total of 25 States have thus far implemented national counter-terrorism strategies.

62. In conducting assessment visits on behalf of the Committee, the Executive Directorate has informed a number of States about the need to adopt a national comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategy that engages a wide range of stakeholders. For example, following the Committee's assessment visit in March 2015, Tunisia requested support for the drafting of a national strategy on counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism. The strategy was adopted in November 2016. Within the framework of the Task Force, the Directorate also facilitated a series of consultations between the Government of Tunisia and civil society with the aim of strengthening the latter's engagement of society in the implementation of the strategy and establishing multi-stakeholder platforms for consultation, cooperation and coordination. It is anticipated that this work will continue beyond 2017.

63. Upon request, the Executive Directorate provides States in need of advice with its compilation of good practices, as well as a draft model national strategy that reflects the provisions of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy at the national level. In advising Member States, the Directorate also uses the guiding principles for counter-terrorism strategies identified at the International Conference on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies, which was held in 2013 in Bogotá and was jointly organized by the Directorate and the Task Force and sponsored by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

64. On 25 May 2017, the Executive Directorate briefed the Committee on its work with Member States and regional organizations on the development of comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies, including the methodology followed, findings, lessons learned and recommendations on the way forward. The briefing was delivered together with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and attended by other partner organizations and United Nations entities. The Chair proposed that the Committee hold an open briefing on the development of national strategies for the wider United Nations membership, which was held on 31 October 2017. The open briefing helped to demonstrate the transparency of the work of the Committee in areas of crucial importance to States' counter-terrorism efforts.

XV. Human rights in the context of counter-terrorism

65. In accordance with the Committee's policy guidance on human rights, the Executive Directorate continued to take account of relevant human rights concerns, both in its dialogue with States in the context of country visits and in the facilitation of technical assistance delivery. The Directorate also engaged actively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including by participating in the development and implementation of technical assistance projects through the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism and with relevant special rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council.

66. The Executive Directorate continued to provide internal human rights guidance to all staff of the Directorate, in accordance with the Committee's policy guidance, including in connection with country visits, preparing overviews of implementation assessments and detailed implementation surveys, organizing thematic and regional

briefings to the Committee and drafting reports to the Council on the threat posed by ISIL, pursuant to resolution 2253 (2015). The Directorate also took into account human rights elements in its work on thematic issues and in organizing special meetings of the Committee on, inter alia, the denial of safe haven and international judicial and law enforcement cooperation.

XVI. Integrating gender as a cross-cutting issue and considering the role of women in countering terrorism and violent extremism

67. In accordance with Council resolution 2242 (2015), the Executive Directorate has integrated gender as a cross-cutting issue into its own activities and those of the Committee, enhanced its collaboration with UN-Women and conducted gender-related research on the factors driving radicalization of women and the impact of counter-terrorism strategies on women's human rights and women's organizations, with a view to developing targeted and evidence-based policy and programming responses and strengthening its gender expertise.

68. The Executive Directorate has taken the gender dimension into consideration in its country-specific assessments and dialogues with Member States, where relevant, in assessing implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014) and in identifying trends, good practices and technical assistance needs. UN-Women has participated in several assessment visits and remains closely engaged in other activities through cooperation with the Directorate at Headquarters and in the field. As part of its efforts to encourage States to develop national comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies, the Directorate identifies related good practices in its country visits and consultations with relevant United Nations entities and international and regional organizations and entities.

69. The Executive Directorate also takes the gender dimension into consideration, as appropriate, in facilitating technical assistance and capacity-building programmes to be implemented by United Nations and other partners, including in particular UN-Women and the Office of Counter-Terrorism. Those efforts include a range of initiatives to address the life cycle of radicalization to violence and to support criminal justice, law enforcement and security actors, including on the roles of women in combating incitement and countering terrorist narratives and in the development of appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters and their families.

XVII. Cooperation with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, other Security Council subsidiary bodies and United Nations entities

70. Pursuant to resolution 2129 (2013), the Executive Directorate continued to engage actively with the Office of Counter-Terrorism (previously the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office) and Task Force entities. The Directorate and the Office of Counter-Terrorism held regular meetings to explore ways to further strengthen their cooperation. As a core member of the Task Force, the Directorate

continued to contribute to various Task Force Working Groups.[7] The Directorate is also a key member of the activities of the Task Force Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism Initiative.

71. The Executive Directorate also led the work of the Task Force to produce a compendium of international and regional instruments, norms and good practices for counter-terrorism-related border control and to develop a framework for coordinated management of border-security risks. A United Nations system-wide matrix of technical assistance projects and capacity-building events was initiated in September 2013 as a direct result of networking between the Directorate and the Office of Counter-Terrorism. The Directorate also worked with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre to design and facilitate technical assistance projects to meet the needs of recipient States at the regional and thematic levels.

72. As Co-Chair of the Task Force Working Group on Legal and Criminal Justice Responses to Terrorism, the Executive Directorate coordinated with Task Force entities to initiate a project on the role of the military in supporting the collection, sharing and use of evidence for promoting the rule of law and human rights-compliant criminal justice responses to terrorism. The goal of the project is to build consensus and establish United Nations guiding principles in this area by the first quarter of 2018. The Directorate obtained a project-funding agreement from Switzerland and held a General Assembly side event with the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague to develop the basis for further discussion and implementation of the project.

73. During the period under review, the four Executive Directorate-led United Nations in depth missions on advance passenger information capacity-building were funded by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Office of Counter-Terrorism though a contribution from the United States. These inter-agency missions included representatives of the International Air Transport Association, ICAO, INTERPOL, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The missions enabled the visiting teams to identify the current status of implementation of advance passenger information programmes and highlighted the steps to be taken by the visited State to implement such a programme (which became an ICAO international standard in October 2017), in full cooperation and partnership with the relevant national actors, including the airline industry. The findings of the consultations were reflected in a road map for the implementation of an advance passenger information system. Missions have thus far been conducted to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malaysia, Morocco and Nigeria. The visited States are selected on the basis of the report of the Executive Directorate on priority States in relation to foreign terrorist fighters identified following the adoption of resolution 2178 (2014). The Directorate leads the missions and on-site visits and chairs the consultations. The

[7] Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement relating to Counter-Terrorism (Co-Chair); Working Group on Countering the Financing of Terrorism (member); Ad hoc Working Group on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (member); Working Group on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies (Co-Chair); Working Group on Preventing and Responding to Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorist Attacks (member); Working Group on Preventing Violent Extremism and Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism (member); Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism (member); Working Group on the Protection of Critical Infrastructure including Vulnerable Targets, Internet and Tourism Security (member); Working Group on Supporting and Highlighting Victims of Terrorism (member); Working Group on Legal And Criminal Justice Responses to Terrorism (Co-Chair); Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism Initiative (Co-Chair); Working Group on a Gender Sensitive Approach to Preventing and Countering Terrorism (Co-Chair) and Working Group on Communications (Co-Chair).

findings of the missions are also included in its ongoing dialogue with Member States regarding the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions, international counter-terrorism instruments and international standards.

74. The Executive Directorate continued to cooperate closely with the experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), including through regular exchange of information, sharing of mission reports and the preparation of joint documents and joint statements of the Chairs of those two Committees and the Counter-Terrorism Committee to the Council. Pursuant to resolution 2253 (2015) and with substantive contributions from the Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), the Directorate drafted five reports of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL and the response of Member States and United Nations entities. The three Committees also explored ways to enhance their cooperation in working with Member States and international and regional organizations. The experts of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) and, where appropriate, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) also joined the Directorate on country visits conducted on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. On 18 December 2014, pursuant to paragraph 23 of resolution 2129 (2013), the Counter-Terrorism Committee arranged a briefing by the Caribbean-based shared counter-terrorism focal point on plans and activities to support the work of the Committee in the region. The Directorate continued its efforts to explore the possibility of expanding the use of regionally based shared focal points to support the work of the Committee and the Directorate, as well as the experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015).

75. Within the framework of the Counter-Terrorism Committee's country visits, the Executive Directorate continued to liaise closely on issues of common concern with the Department of Political Affairs, resident coordinators of the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations country team members, other Security Council sanctions regimes, the Special Adviser on Africa, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and for Central Africa. The Directorate has also been an active participant in several inter-agency task forces, including on Boko Haram, Central Africa and Mali, and has engaged closely with other partners on thematic issues of concern to the Committee.

76. The Executive Directorate also worked closely with the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other United Nations entities within the framework of country visits and the facilitation of technical assistance delivery. The Terrorism Prevention Branch participated in most Committee assessment visits and actively participated in other events of the Committee and the Directorate on regional and thematic issues in an effort to help strengthen the counter-terrorism capacities of Member States.

XVIII. Engagement with international, regional and subregional organizations

77. International, regional and subregional organizations continued to be key partners of the Committee and the Executive Directorate in their work to monitor, promote and facilitate implementation by Member States of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 1963 (2010), 2129 (2013) and 2178 (2014). Engagement with these

entities included promoting international standards, codes and best practices, assessing implementation efforts of States, identifying regional and thematic challenges, assisting in capacity-building efforts by States and facilitating the delivery of technical assistance. The Directorate also continued to be an active participant in the meetings and activities of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and its regional and thematic groups on the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa, foreign terrorist fighters, detention and reintegration, criminal justice and the rule of law, and countering violent extremism.

78. In the area of counter-financing of terrorism, the Executive Directorate continued to work closely with FATF and its global network. The Directorate was closely involved in the revision of the FATF recommendation on the criminalization of the financing of terrorism and contributed actively to several typology reports, including on terrorism financing in West and Central Africa (2016) and on the financing of recruitment (2017). As well as participating in FATF and FATF-style regional body events and joint special meetings, the Directorate also hosts annual technical discussions on the implementation of standards on combating the financing of terrorism and lessons learned from the FATF mutual evaluation process. Presidents of FATF addressed the Committee in 2014 and 2017, and the Chair of the Eurasian Group on Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism did so in 2016. The Directorate subsequently signed a cooperation agreement with the Eurasian Group on Money Laundering.

79. During the reporting period, the Executive Directorate continued to collaborate with the Global Counterterrorism Forum, notably though its relevant working groups, to improve coherence, coordinate policy and engage in initiatives of the Forum. The Directorate also provided regular input for the development of Forum good practices, participated in Forum meetings and events, including the twelfth Coordinating Committee meeting of 18 September 2017, and worked closely with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, Hedayah and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law.

80. The Executive Directorate also concluded several formal agreements for enhanced cooperation and information exchange with regional organizations, including the Commonwealth of Independent States Anti-Terrorism Centre, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the regional counter-terrorist structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and concluded an agreement on cooperation and coordination with INTERPOL. The Directorate is currently discussing with ICAO the possibility of signing a similar agreement.

XIX. Interaction with civil society, the private sector, academia and other non-governmental actors

81. Pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 1963 (2010), the Executive Directorate continued to engage with a broad range of non-governmental actors in promoting effective implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005), including through the development of strategic partnerships. On 19 February 2015, acting pursuant to paragraph 19 of resolution 2129 (2013), the Directorate launched its Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network. On 16 November 2017, the Committee held its second meeting with members of the Network, during which the Committee, the Directorate and the research community analysed and discussed several emerging issues, trends and developments relating to resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014) and subsequent Council resolutions. A meeting outcome document was submitted to the Committee. The Network has grown considerably since its launch,

in terms of both size and expertise, and now includes over 100 leading research entities from around the world.

82. Partnering with academic and research institutions and think tanks continued to support the Committee and the Executive Directorate in their efforts to keep abreast of emerging trends and challenges and to identify and share good practices in implementation of the relevant Council resolutions by Member States. Council resolution 2354 (2017) directs the Committee, with the support of the Directorate, to work with outside partners, including members of the Research Network, to identify possible ways to measure the impact and effectiveness of counter-narratives and to develop an annual workplan on countering terrorist narratives. This is currently one of the key areas of cooperation between the Directorate and its Network partners.

83. In accordance with Council resolution 2341 (2017), which directs the Committee, with the support of the Executive Directorate, to examine States' efforts to protect critical infrastructure from terrorist attack, as relevant to the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001), with the aim of identifying good practices, gaps and vulnerabilities in that area . Taking into consideration relevant research from academia and drawing upon the Directorate's assessment, the Directorate produced a trends report on critical infrastructure in March 2017. The Committee held open briefings on protection of critical infrastructure in tourism on 12 June 2014 and on strengthening emergency responses in the aftermath of terrorist incidents on 16 June 2015. On 21 November 2016, the Council held an Arria formula meeting on the protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks initiated by the delegation of Ukraine. The Directorate also supports the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Working Group on the Protection of Critical Infrastructure including Vulnerable Targets, Internet and Tourism Security.

84. Interaction with academic institutions, think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private-sector entities continued to enhance the Committee's knowledge of and response to key counter-terrorism challenges, including countering incitement motivated by extremism and intolerance, preventing abuse of the non-profit organization sector for terrorism-financing purposes, the development of prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies, the introduction of effective measures to bring terrorists to justice, border management, and the provision of technical assistance as a supplement to the efforts of donor Governments. The Executive Directorate also interacted with non-governmental actors within the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force framework, notably through the activities of its various working groups. In this regard, the implementation of resolution 2331 (2016), on countering trafficking in persons in armed conflict in all its forms, provided an opportunity for the Directorate to engage with a number of NGOs and academics on, inter alia, human trafficking that finances terrorism.

85. In its resolution 2129 (2013), the Security Council noted the evolving nexus between terrorism and ICT, in particular the Internet, as well as the use of technologies to commit terrorist acts and to facilitate such acts through their use to incite, recruit, fund or plan terrorist acts. In the resolution, the Council directed the Executive Directorate to continue to address this issue, in consultation with States, international, regional and subregional organizations, the private sector and civil society and to advise the Committee on further approaches. As well as organizing two special meetings of the Committee involving all relevant stakeholders, the Directorate promoted the adoption of self-regulation measures by the ICT industry, through consultations conducted across the globe with the support of leading ICT companies, such as Facebook, Microsoft, Weibo, Google, Telefonica, Twitter and Kaspersky.

86. Consultations with the private sector led to the 2017 launch of the Tech against Terrorism initiative (www.techagainstterrorism.org), which aims to promote the

adoption and sharing of good practices by ICT firms worldwide, including smaller companies. The Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism announced at the launch of the initiative, on 1 August 2017, that knowledge-sharing across the industry would be accomplished through the Tech against Terrorism knowledge-sharing platform. In this regard, it should be noted that in resolution 2354 (2017) the Council requested the Committee to further develop initiatives to strengthen public-private partnerships in countering terrorist narratives and welcomed the comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives (S/2017/375, annex), which notes the value of working with the private sector and initiatives such as those of ICT for Peace.

87. The Executive Directorate's partnership with the ICT industry will also be leveraged to modernize and strengthen the capacity of central authorities, prosecutors and investigators to preserve and obtain electronic evidence in cross-border investigations into terrorist activities and related organized crime. The Directorate also supports the efforts of the World Economic Forum to promote public-private cooperation, including as Co-Chair of its Global Agenda Council on Cybersecurity and as Co-Chair of its Industrial Internet of Things Safety Network, which aims to identify security challenges relating to the industrial Internet of things and develop frameworks and principles for addressing them, including by strengthening device and implementation security and ensuring that users, manufacturers and implementers act in the interests of society as a whole.

XX. Public communications and outreach

88. In accordance with the Committee's revised communications strategy, adopted by the Committee in 2014, the Executive Directorate adopted a considerably more proactive approach to its communications efforts during the period under review. In implementing the revised strategy, the Directorate stressed the added value provided by the Committee and the Directorate to the global efforts of the United Nations to counter terrorism. In doing so, it employed a wide range of media tools, including multimedia, and informed a variety of constituencies and target groups about the activities of the Committee and the Directorate.

89. The online presence of the Committee and the Executive Directorate was revamped to respond to the rapid evolution in user platforms (including mobile devices), which now integrate features such as RSS (rich site summary) feeds, social media and sharing functions. The Committee's website has achieved a 158 per cent increase in page views since 2014. Currently available in English only, it is being translated into the other five official languages of the United Nations. The Directorate has established a presence on Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and Instagram. The number of Twitter followers reached close to 15,000 in 2017, almost triple the number recorded at the previous mandate renewal review.

90. Exposure in traditional media also registered a significant increase. The Committee and/or its Chair, the Executive Directorate, the Executive Director and/or the Deputy Executive Director were mentioned, on average, over 100 times annually. This trend was driven in part by an increase in the frequency of press briefings and greater interest from traditional media. Around 1,000 individual visitors were briefed annually on the work of the Committee and the Directorate. The number of subscribers to the quarterly electronic newsletter surpassed 2,000 in 2017, representing a nearly 500 per cent increase compared with 2014.

91. In an effort to increase awareness of the Committee's special meetings, open briefings and other events, both internally and externally, the Executive Directorate employed a broader set of outreach tools, including social media posts, cross-posting by key United Nations social media accounts and targeted invitations to academics,

professional groups and journalists. A Tweetwall was used at two Committee events. During the review period, the Directorate also produced and printed several publications containing major reports and relevant Council resolutions.

XXI. Organization and operations of the Executive Directorate

92. The period under review was marked primarily by the continued financial constraints of Member States. In that context, the Executive Directorate continued to function with minimal staffing growth (three additional posts since 2014: two in 2015 and one in 2017), despite its substantially increased workload. The staff of the Directorate currently consists of 36 full-time Professional and 8 General Service positions. The Directorate continued its efforts to ensure that it has the capacity required to perform the additional tasks conferred by recently adopted Council resolutions on terrorism and to meet the demands of technical assistance facilitation projects funded through extrabudgetary funds.

93. Since the establishment of its trust fund, the Executive Directorate has become more efficient in managing voluntary contributions in support of its facilitation activities.

94. The Executive Directorate will continue to do its utmost to effectively and efficiently fulfil the tasks assigned to it by the Council and the Committee, in accordance with the relevant Council resolutions.

Annex II

Note from the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations and its Member States are faced with an increasingly complex and multidimensional terrorist threat. The present note contains suggestions for the Committee's consideration ahead of the Council's forthcoming review of the mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. It also identifies certain challenges imposed upon the Directorate by the significant evolution in the global terrorist threat, the need to ensure effective and full implementation of the relevant Council resolutions and the Committee's recommendations, and the significant increase in the tasks conferred upon the Directorate by the Council in recent resolutions.

2. The note also contains certain suggestions concerning critical workstreams of the Executive Directorate which the Committee may wish to take into account. These suggestions are intended to reflect the recently reformed United Nations counter-terrorism architecture and to ensure that the Directorate is provided with the necessary means to fulfil its mandate, effectively serve the Committee and the Council and, most importantly, effectively assist States to counter terrorism. My primary objective is to help ensure the maximum impact of the Directorate's assessments, analysis and expertise in advancing the role of the entire United Nations system in countering terrorism.

II. Strengthening the Executive Directorate's assessments and its methodology

3. The on-site country assessments conducted on behalf of the Committee are a critical component of the work of the Executive Directorate. There are several ways in which the Directorate can enhance the impact and effectiveness of its assessment work, including:

(a) Introducing greater flexibility into the development of the list of States to be visited;

(b) Improving responsiveness to new and emerging trends;

(c) Extending visits where necessary in order to ensure substantive engagement with national actors and implementing partners;

(d) Developing new visit formats;

(e) Adapting the Directorate's working procedures.

4. Expert assessments by the Executive Directorate of the counter-terrorism regimes of Member States are unique and comprehensive products. They address overall national counter-terrorism efforts by States, their strengths, weaknesses and technical assistance needs and good practices developed to advance implementation of the relevant Council resolutions. They also identify emerging terrorism trends and challenges and help to assess compliance in all areas of counter-terrorism.

5. The assessment methodology developed under the direction of the Committee ensures that dialogue with Member States is based on a set of international counter-terrorism standards, codes and practices, and that it is applied in a consistent manner to all Member States (even though the on-site assessment itself is tailored to the particularities of the visited Member State). In this regard, the recently updated technical guide is a critical tool in efforts by the Executive Directorate to ensure consistent and thorough assessment. The Committee may wish to consider ways to raise the awareness of Member States of the guide and to ensure that it remains continuously updated and available to Member States in all six official languages of the United Nations.

6. The assessments by the Executive Directorate also draw on its expertise in identifying emerging trends, progress made and common shortfalls, help to deepen its understanding of these issues and inform its overall analysis of the situation at the national, regional and cross-regional levels.

7. A broad range of international and regional organizations and United Nations bodies participate in the country assessment visits. Their participation not only strengthens the assessment of matters within their expertise, but also enables them to play an important role in the subsequent facilitation of technical assistance for the visited State.

8. In this regard, I wish to make some brief suggestions for strengthening the visit methodology.

9. Current Committee practice is to develop a list of proposed States to be visited during a relatively long period (the most recent list covered the period 2014–2017). This approach enables the Executive Directorate to make long-term plans, but it also undermines the ability of the Committee and the Directorate to respond quickly to new trends and developments and to specific visit requests by Member States. The Committee may therefore wish to conduct an annual review of its multi-year plan so as to take stock of which visits have been conducted, consider the situation of Member States that have not consented to the Committee's visit requests (and how best to follow up in that regard) and, where appropriate, consider whether any additional visit proposals should be submitted to the Committee to ensure that the list of visits reflects the most recent terrorist threats, trends, challenges and needs.

10. The Committee may also wish to review its procedures for visits to Member States. For example, in order to address the volume of information-exchange required pursuant to the recently adopted Council resolutions and give due consideration to all relevant issues (including cross-cutting issues such as human rights and gender) the Committee may wish to consider expanding the objectives of the visits, as necessary. This would enable the visiting delegation to more effectively cover the relevant issues in more depth and agree with the Government on an action plan for implementing the agreed upon recommendations. It would also give the delegation more time to meet with implementing partners and international, regional and subregional organizations with a view to ensuring effective facilitation of technical assistance delivery.

11. Moreover, in order to address the broader range of issues arising from the evolving terrorist threat and the evolving needs of Member States, the Committee may wish to consider developing new types of visits to respond to specific circumstances. Such visits may also involve more expeditious procedures, such as those employed by the Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015).

12. In this regard, the Counter-Terrorism Committee may wish to consider:

(a) Visits to States which, according to assessment and analysis by the Executive Directorate, are vulnerable to an imminent, critical or serious terrorist

threat. Such visits would enable the Directorate to meet with the officials of the States concerned to discuss their preventive policies and explore ways to provide support, if necessary;

(b) Post-crisis visits to States in which a terrorist incident has occurred. Such visits would enable the Directorate to meet with officials of the States concerned to discuss capacity-building needs and share effective crisis-management practices;

(c) Expert-level visits to States that have not yet submitted relevant information concerning their implementation efforts or are late in doing so. Such visits would enable an expert from the Directorate, perhaps supported by experts from other international, regional and subregional organizations, to spend one to two weeks in the State concerned to gather facts and figures about its situation.

III. Enhancing impact through follow-up

13. In order to maximize the impact of the assessment and analysis by the Executive Directorate, it is essential that there be concrete follow-up to country visits, as well as tangible support for the implementation of the Committee's visit recommendations. In this regard, the Directorate proposes to work more closely with high-risk Member States to address the recommendations and priorities outlined in the reports and work more closely with its United Nations and implementing partners to facilitate technical assistance delivery. In order to do this, the Directorate would need to strengthen expert-level follow-up through increased engagement with its implementing partners. This would also help to raise the profile of its work and thereby encourage broader and increased participation in the visits.

14. It is imperative to ensure immediate, long-term and effective follow-up to the Committee's visits. Effective results must be achieved on the ground to justify the resources invested in the visits by the United Nations, the Committee and the visited State. In this regard, I would recall that the Council, in its resolution 2129 (2013), invites the Executive Directorate to conduct regular follow-up activity with concerned Member States. Effective follow-up on the implementation of identified gaps and needs is a critical outcome, both of the visits and of the Committee's and the Directorate's overall work.

15. The Committee's visit reports include recommendations that are generally divided into two categories: those that can be implemented by States within their existing resources and capacities and those that require technical assistance. In this regard, it is important to recall that successful follow-up also depends in part on a State's response to the recommendations. Member States should therefore be reminded of their obligation to meet their international counter-terrorism obligations. The Committee may wish to consider enhancing and expediting follow-up activities by States through increased direct dialogue between the Committee and officials of the visited Member State during subsequent meetings of the Committee.

16. A further effective follow-up mechanism may be for the Executive Directorate to conduct an expert-level follow-up visit to take stock of progress made in implementing the Committee's recommendations.

17. Guided by the Committee, the Executive Directorate has established and developed close working partnerships with all relevant international, regional and subregional organizations. These partnerships are among the Directorate's strongest comparative advantages, and I am committed to ensuring that they deliver the best possible value to the Committee and, most importantly, to Member States.

18. A vital component of those partnerships is the participation of the Executive Directorate's key implementing partners in the country visits. Moreover, many implementing partners have integrated the Committee's recommendations into their work programmes. In this regard, the Committee may wish to encourage specialized international organizations to secure the resources required to join the assessment visits.

IV. Facilitation of technical assistance delivery and implementation of Committee recommendations

19. In its resolution 2129 (2013), the Council encourages the Executive Directorate to facilitate technical assistance, specifically by promoting engagement between providers of capacity-building assistance and recipients, and to assess the impact of its donor-supported project activity linked to capacity-building and cooperation. However, the current facilitation process is too lengthy. Too much time elapses between the identification of technical assistance needs and the delivery of assistance. Moreover, the Directorate's overall capacity to facilitate technical assistance delivery is limited, especially in cases where the necessary funds and donors are not available. This undermines the implementation of recommendations whose implementation requires technical assistance. It also means that technical assistance referrals may need to be subsequently amended.

20. Many States welcome the confidential nature of their dialogue with the Committee. However, some States would benefit greatly from sharing the Committee's recommendations with donors and providers. In cases where States have agreed to share their technical assistance assessments, the outcome has been increased transparency and an enhanced implementation process. I stand ready to propose to the Committee practical ways to encourage States to consider sharing their reports more widely with donors and providers with a view to attracting capacity-building support.

21. The expanded use of platforms for coordination with the donor community may also help to expedite and strengthen uptake of recommendations and technical assistance delivery by providers. In this regard, the Committee may wish to consider organizing regular meetings, based on the country visits and assessments. This would provide opportunities to share priority assistance needs and related assessments and to aggregate analyses and recommendations and their underlying rationales.

22. Within the framework of its periodic partnership review of particular country profiles, the Committee may also wish to consider conducting, with the support of the Executive Directorate and the Committee secretariat, a more robust stocktaking exercise that involves all relevant actors, as well as the targeted beneficiary. In order to attract focused and sustained international support, and based on the methods employed by the Security Council and other forums to support particular States, the Committee may also wish to consider establishing groups of friends, under the leadership of the Committee Chair or Co-chair and the Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, for States in need of counter-terrorism-related technical assistance.

V. Strengthening the impact of the Executive Directorate's analysis and identification of challenges, gaps, trends and developments

23. In response to the unprecedented evolution in the global terrorist threat, the Security Council has adopted a number of resolutions since the previous mandate review. Those resolutions address a broad range of issues, including stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, strengthening international judicial and law enforcement cooperation, countering terrorist narratives, countering the use of information and communications technology (ICT) for terrorist purposes, combating human trafficking for terrorism-financing purposes, combating terrorist threats to civil aviation, protecting critical infrastructure, building public-private partnerships and preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons.

24. In order to support and promote implementation of these resolutions, the Committee and the Council rely heavily on the Executive Directorate's assessments and analytical capacity. The Directorate has rapidly developed assessment criteria and identified good practices in a number of areas, including the development of prosecution and rehabilitation strategies, the use of biometrics and the protection of critical infrastructure. The Directorate has also identified common gaps, trends and challenges in implementing advance passenger information systems, countering violent extremism and counter-messaging, and has integrated ICT, the gender dimension and human rights aspects into its work pursuant to the Council resolutions.

25. The Executive Directorate has also produced three analytical reports on foreign terrorist fighters (drafted jointly with the Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015)) and five reports of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2253 (2015), prepared global implementation surveys on the implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005), developed a framework on counter-messaging (which served as the basis for Council resolution 2354 (2017)), drafted the guiding principles on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and identified good practices relevant to the recently adopted resolutions and incorporated them into its updated technical guide. At the request of the Committee, it has also provided numerous policy papers on various emerging issues and trends.

26. Like its ongoing assessment work, the Executive Directorate's analysis and expertise play an important role in supporting the efforts of the Committee and the Council to identify good practices, gaps, challenges, trends, developments and emerging priorities.

27. The Executive Directorate's analysis of challenges, gaps, trends and developments is unique. Anchored in its assessments, its analysis is enhanced by its dialogue with Member States and with its extensive network of partners, including international and regional organizations, civil society, the members of the Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network and the private sector. It is informed and enhanced by a wealth of data and expertise. Its analysis also integrates key cross-cutting issues, including human rights, ICT and gender, which are mainstreamed throughout all its activities.

28. The analytical products requested by the Committee and the Council serve many purposes. They assist the Committee and the Council to determine where to focus their attention, both regionally and thematically, within the framework of the relevant resolutions, enhance the quality and depth of the Committee's assessment visits, provide Member States with practical ways to implement key elements of the resolutions, enable the Executive Directorate to facilitate the delivery of technical

assistance programmes that go beyond a specific country or a region and help to ensure that assistance programmes address the latest gaps, challenges, trends and developments. I am confident that the Directorate's analysis will continue to facilitate effective implementation of the relevant resolutions.

29. The Executive Directorate will continue to share its assessment and analysis through special meetings, open briefings, open meetings and dialogue with Member States, United Nations entities, experts, international, regional and subregional organizations and other relevant stakeholders. However, much more can be done to ensure that United Nations bodies and international, regional and subregional organizations continue to draw on the Directorate's assessment, analysis and expertise. Council resolutions 2129 (2013), 2185 (2014) and 2195 (2014) and the Council's presidential statement of 19 November 2014 (S/PRST/2014/23) notably encourage the Directorate to enhance its dialogue and information-sharing with special envoys and the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, including during the planning of missions, as appropriate, in relation to the implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005).

30. The sharing of information through these various forums is essential. In view of the expertise available within the Executive Directorate, the Committee may wish to consider exploring further mechanisms for maximizing coordination and synergies between the Directorate and other United Nations bodies. Those mechanisms could include briefings on counter-terrorism issues for Security Council missions, regular briefing of the Secretary-General's special representatives, involvement of the Directorate in the planning and review of peacekeeping operations and the provision of counter-terrorism advice to United Nations Headquarters and field missions. I shall make every effort to ensure that the Directorate's assessment and analysis inform United Nations policy discussions and the development of technical assistance programmes by other United Nations entities. I would welcome the Committee's support in those endeavours. The Directorate's assessment, analysis and expertise should be a central component of multilateral counter-terrorism efforts and of the responses of Member States.

VI. Cooperation with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other United Nations bodies

31. If the current level of cooperation and coordination between the Executive Directorate and other United Nations counter-terrorism bodies is to be maintained and enhanced, it is essential that the Directorate is supported by the Committee and the Council. Within the framework of the recently reformed United Nations counter-terrorism architecture, every effort should be made to ensure a comprehensive United Nations approach to counter-terrorism, including by ensuring that other United Nations bodies make full use of the Directorate's assessments, analysis and expertise.

32. The Committee may also wish to consider ways to ensure effective and expeditious operational coordination and cooperation with the Office of Counter-Terrorism. This coordination and cooperation is crucial to ensuring rapid delivery of assistance, on the basis of the needs identified during the Committee's assessment visits.

33. As Executive Director, I shall make every effort to strengthen this relationship, with a view to ensuring that the Executive Directorate's assessment, analysis and expertise benefit not only the Office of Counter-Terrorism but also all other relevant United Nations bodies, in all areas of their work. The Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism and I have already held several fruitful meetings and we shall

continue to work closely together to ensure effective and proactive collaboration between our two Offices.

VII. Raising the Executive Directorate's profile and enhancing transparency

34. In accordance with the Committee's communications strategy, adopted in 2014, the Executive Directorate has taken a considerably more proactive approach since the previous mandate review. The Committee's online identity has been completely overhauled, including through the development of a revamped website and through expanded presence on social media. Exposure through traditional media has also increased considerably.

35. In view of the rapidly evolving terrorism landscape, and in light of the recent reform of the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture, I believe that there is a need to elevate the profile of the Committee and the Executive Directorate, both internally and externally. We should enhance our communication and outreach activities in order to raise awareness and understanding of the role and functions of the Committee and the Directorate, their relationships and interaction with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the division of labour among Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities and the added value of the United Nations to the global counter-terrorism effort.

VIII. Structure and resources of the Executive Directorate

36. Since the Executive Directorate was established in 2004, its operating environment (including the nature of the global terrorist threat, the United Nations institutional structure and the expectations of Member States) has been dramatically transformed. Moreover, the Executive Directorate's mandate has been significantly deepened and broadened since 2004. The recent establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism also requires that the Executive Directorate allocate additional resources in support of the Task Force working groups and in support of efforts to strengthen coordination of the United Nations response to terrorism. If the Directorate is to continue to provide the Committee with rigorous assessment and analysis, ensure effective and thorough follow-up to the Committee's recommendations, meet the expectations of Member States for rapid delivery of technical assistance and ensure effective cooperation, both within the United Nations and with implementing partners, it must significantly enhance its resources and expertise in all areas covered by the relevant resolutions. The Committee may therefore wish to consider reviewing the Directorate's current staffing and resource levels within the framework of the Council's review process.

37. A stronger, more dynamic and better-equipped Executive Directorate can serve only to strengthen the counter-terrorism efforts of the United Nations and of Member States. I wish to assure the Committee of my full support during the review process and I remain at the Committee's disposal to provide further suggestions for its consideration, if required.

United Nations S/2017/1102

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 December 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 22 December 2017 from the Chair of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals on the Working Group's activities in 2017.

I should be grateful if the present letter and the report were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Elbio **Rosselli**
Chair
Informal Working Group on International Tribunals

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Report of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals for 2017

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted to inform the Security Council of the work of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals in 2017.

II. Organizational matters

2. The Working Group was established on an informal basis in 2000 to consider matters relating to the United Nations and United Nations-assisted tribunals, in particular the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The Working Group consists of the legal advisers of the permanent missions of the members of the Security Council and is assisted by the Office of the Legal Counsel of the Office of Legal Affairs and the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of Political Affairs.

3. Until 2007, the Working Group's chairmanship followed the monthly rotation of the presidency of the Security Council and it met only on an ad hoc basis. At the end of 2007, given the intensive work relating to residual issues and the completion strategies of the Tribunals pursuant to resolutions 1503 (2003) and 1534 (2004), the Working Group decided to appoint a single Chair and began meeting regularly. Subsequently, the Working Group was chaired by Belgium (2008), Austria (2009 and 2010), Portugal (2011), Guatemala (2012 and 2013) and Chile (2014 and 2015). Uruguay had the honour of chairing the Working Group in 2016 and 2017.

4. In 2017, the Working Group held two formal meetings, with the Presidents and the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

III. Briefings to the Security Council

5. Following previous practice, the Permanent Representative of Uruguay, in his capacity as Chair of the Working Group, briefed the Security Council on the activities of the Working Group and gave his personal reflections on 7 June (7960th meeting) and 6 December 2017 (8120th meeting).

IV. Exchange of views with the Presidents and the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Residual Mechanism

6. At its meeting on 5 June 2017, the Working Group held an exchange of views with the Presidents and the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Residual Mechanism, in preparation for their briefings to the Security Council on the work and activities of the Tribunal and the Mechanism on 7 June 2017.

7. At its meeting on 5 December 2017, the Working Group held an exchange of views with the Presidents and the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Residual Mechanism, in preparation for their briefings to the Security Council on the work and activities of the Tribunal and the Mechanism on 6 December 2017. The Working Group also discussed the possibility of adopting

a statement by the President of the Security Council or a press statement to mark the closure of the Tribunal on 31 December 2017.

V. Conclusion

8. In 2017, Uruguay was honoured to continue to chair the Working Group, giving it the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the successfully closed International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Residual Mechanism.

9. During the year, the Chair exchanged views with the members of the Working Group on several issues, for example in response to a request for guidance from the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

10. By a letter dated 20 January 2017 addressed to the Chair, the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services requested guidance on whether the Security Council would require an OIOS evaluation report on the Residual Mechanism at the time of its next periodic review, in 2018.

11. Following consultations with members of the Working Group, by a letter dated 27 February 2017 addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, the Chair confirmed that, in accordance with paragraph 7 of the statement by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2015/21), the Council required OIOS to conduct an evaluation of the methods and work of the Residual Mechanism covering the period of the Mechanism's operation, beginning with the last review by the Council (December 2015) and taking into account other OIOS reviews completed in the period of the Mechanism's operation.

12. The members of the Working Group also considered that the OIOS evaluation should be conducted in 2018 and the report presented to the Security Council by 31 March 2018.

13. Aside from the meetings previously referred to herein, the Working Group held informal meetings in March and December 2017. During the meeting in March, the Chair proposed that the Working Group should discuss the letter dated 1 March 2017 from the President of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/180) and a letter dated 6 March 2017 from the President of the Residual Mechanism addressed to the Chair concerning the OIOS evaluation.

14. On 17 November, the Chair circulated a draft statement by the President of the Security Council relating to the closure of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. On 8 December, the Chair proposed a draft press statement on the same topic, given that no consensus was reached on the adoption of a statement. On 19 December, the Chair held an informal meeting to continue the exchange of views about the issue.

15. The cooperation of the Working Group was important in supporting the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Residual Mechanism. That positive attitude should continue into 2018, in order to follow up on the issues that remain pending.

16. Given the closure of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the Chair notes that it is important that the Security Council continue to support and monitor the work of the Residual Mechanism.

17. The Office of Legal Affairs and the Security Council Affairs Division provided invaluable support in 2017. The Presidents of the International Tribunal for the

Former Yugoslavia and of the Residual Mechanism, as well as the Prosecutor, worked closely together in the furtherance of the mandates and timelines established by the Security Council and maintained an excellent relationship with the Working Group.

18. The members of the Working Group wish Peru every success as the new Chair of the Working Group.

United Nations S/2017/1103

Security Council

Distr.: General
29 December 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 22 December 2017 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, containing an account of the Committee's activities from 1 January to 31 December 2017. The report, which was approved by the Committee, is being submitted in accordance with the note by the President of the Security Council of 29 March 1995 (S/1995/234).

I should be grateful if the present letter and the report were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Amr Abdellatif **Aboulatta**
Chair
Security Council Committee established
pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning
the Democratic Republic of the Congo

17-21745 (E) 291217

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Report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The present report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017.

2. The Bureau of the Committee consisted of Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta (Egypt) as Chair and the representatives of Ukraine and Uruguay as Vice-Chairs.

II. Background

3. By its resolution 1493 (2003), the Security Council imposed an arms embargo on all foreign and Congolese armed groups and militias operating in the territory of North and South Kivu and Ituri and on groups not party to the Comprehensive and All-Inclusive Agreement on the Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By its resolution 1533 (2004), the Council established the Committee and requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Committee, to establish a group of experts to monitor the implementation of the arms embargo. The scope of the embargo was subsequently amended several times; most significantly, by paragraph 2 of its resolution 1807 (2008), the Council determined that the measures on arms no longer applied to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By paragraph 3 (a) of the same resolution, the Council also clarified that the measures on arms would not apply to supplies of arms and related materiel and technical training and assistance intended solely for support of or use by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By paragraph 1 of its resolution 2136 (2014), the Council decided that the measures on arms would not apply to the supply of arms and related materiel, in addition to assistance, advice or training, intended solely for the support of or use by the African Union Regional Task Force. The arms embargo similarly does not apply to supplies of protective clothing or non-lethal military equipment intended solely for humanitarian or protective use.

4. By its resolution 1596 (2005), the Security Council imposed targeted travel and financial measures on individuals and entities designated by the Committee as violating the arms embargo. In subsequent resolutions, the Council gradually expanded the criteria based upon which an individual or entity may be designated for targeted sanctions to include political and military leaders who impede the disarmament process, use children in armed conflict or target children or women in situations of armed conflict.

5. The Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo initially consisted of four experts, a number that was increased to five experts by the Security Council in its resolution 1596 (2005) and then again increased to six experts by the Council in its resolution 1952 (2010). The Group's mandate was most recently extended by the Council in its resolution 2360 (2017).

6. Further background information on the Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions regime can be found in the previous annual reports of the Committee.

III. Summary of the activities of the Committee

7. The Committee held two formal meetings, on 30 January and 20 March; met six times in informal consultations, on 15 February, 22 May, 21 July, 7 September, 13 November and 11 December; and held one open briefing for all Member States on 4 August, in addition to conducting its work through written procedures.

8. During the formal meeting held on 30 January, the Committee met with representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. The Committee exchanged views with the representatives on the midterm report of the Group of Experts (S/2016/1102).

9. During the informal consultations held on 15 February, the Committee received a briefing, by teleconference, from the Coordinator of the Group of Experts on the Group's monthly updates for December 2016 and January 2017, submitted pursuant to paragraph 9 of resolution 2293 (2016).

10. During the formal meeting held on 20 March, the Committee received a briefing by videoconference from the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region. The Committee also heard statements from the following regional States participating in the meeting: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda.

11. During the informal consultations held on 22 May, the Committee was briefed by representatives of MONUSCO and the Mine Action Service on the mandate of the Mission to monitor the arms embargo, as well as weapons and ammunition management in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

12. During the informal consultations held on 21 July, the Committee heard a presentation by the Group of Experts on its final report (S/2017/672/Rev.1), submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution 2360 (2017), and discussed the recommendations contained therein.

13. During the open briefing on 4 August, the Committee heard statements on the illicit exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Coordinator of the Group of Experts. Member States participating in the briefing also made statements in their national capacity.

14. During the informal consultations held on 7 September, the Committee heard a presentation by the Group of Experts on its programme of work and mandate renewed by resolution 2360 (2017).

15. During the informal consultations held on 13 November, the Chair briefed the Committee on his visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congo and the United Arab Emirates from 16 to 19 October. The Coordinator of the Group of Experts, who also participated in the visit, joined the consultations by teleconference.

16. During the informal consultations held on 11 December, the Committee heard a presentation by the Coordinator of the Group of Experts on the Group's midterm report (S/2017/1091), submitted in accordance with paragraph 6 of resolution 2360 (2017), and discussed the recommendations contained therein.

17. Following the above-mentioned open briefing and informal consultations, and in accordance with paragraph 104 of the annex to the note by the President of the Security Council contained in document S/2017/507, the Committee issued a number of press releases[1] containing brief summaries of the formal meetings and informal consultations.

18. On 17 August, the Chair of the Committee briefed the Security Council on the main findings set out in the final report of the Group of Experts (S/2017/672/Rev.1).

19. From 16 to 19 October, the Chair of the Committee visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congo and the United Arab Emirates. It was the third such visit of the Chair to the Great Lakes region since the establishment of the sanctions regime in 2004, and the third consecutive visit since 2015. In the course of the visit, the Chair endeavoured to secure commitments from the Governments of the Member States visited to improve cooperation with the Committee and the Group of Experts.

20. The Committee sent 57 communications to 40 Member States and other stakeholders with reference to the implementation of the sanctions measures.

IV. Exemptions

21. Exemptions to the arms embargo are contained in paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 1807 (2008).

22. Exemptions to the travel ban are contained in paragraph 10 of resolution 1807 (2008).

23. Exemptions to the asset freeze are contained in paragraph 12 of resolution 1807 (2008).

24. The Committee received seven arms embargo notifications invoking paragraphs 2 and 5 of resolution 1807 (2008), as most recently reaffirmed in paragraph 1 of resolution 2360 (2017), for the provision of weapons, ammunition and arms and related materiel to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

V. Sanctions list

25. The criteria for the designation of individuals and entities as subject to the travel ban and asset freeze are set out in paragraph 7 of resolution 2293 (2016) as reaffirmed and expanded, respectively, in paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 2360 (2017). The procedures for requesting listing and delisting are described in the Committee's guidelines for the conduct of its work.

26. As at the end of the reporting period, there were 31 individuals and nine entities on the sanctions list of the Committee.

VI. Group of Experts

27. The work of the Group of Experts was disrupted by the murder of two of its experts, Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp, on 12 March. Therefore, the Group of Experts delivered its final report in August, following an extension authorized by the Security Council in line with resolution 2360 (2017). The Committee followed the

[1] The Committee issued press releases in connection with its formal meeting on 30 January, formal meeting on 20 March, informal consultations on 22 May, open briefing on 4 August, informal consultations on 7 September and informal consultations on 13 November.

developments with regard to the killing of the experts, including the executive summary of the report of the United Nations Security Management System Board of Inquiry transmitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on 15 August (S/2017/713) and the deployment by the Secretary-General of a United Nations team, consisting of one senior official, four technical experts and support staff to assist the Congolese authorities with its national investigation (S/2017/917).

28. The final report of the Group of Experts submitted pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution 2360 (2017), was issued as a document of the Council on 10 August (S/2017/672/Rev.1).

29. On 4 August, following the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2360 (2017), the Secretary-General appointed six individuals to the Group of Experts, with expertise in arms (one expert), armed groups (two experts), natural resources/financial issues (two experts) and humanitarian issues (one expert) (S/2017/683). The mandate of the Group will expire on 1 August 2018.

30. On 28 November, in accordance with paragraph 6 of resolution 2360 (2017), the Group of Experts provided its midterm report to the Committee, which was transmitted to the Security Council on 22 December and issued as a document of the Council (S/2017/1091).

31. The Group of Experts conducted regular visits to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (primarily to Goma and Beni, North Kivu, and Bukavu, South Kivu) and also visited France, Italy, Kenya, Rwanda, Sweden, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America.

32. In pursuance of its mandate, the Group of Experts, through the Secretariat, sent 59 letters to Member States, the Security Council, the Committee and international and national entities.

VII. Secretariat administrative and substantive support

33. The Security Council Affairs Division provided substantive and procedural support to the Chair and the members of the Committee. Advisory support was also provided to Member States to promote understanding of the sanctions regimes and facilitate the implementation of the sanctions measures. Induction briefings were also provided to incoming members of the Council to familiarize them with the specific issues relevant to the sanctions regime.

34. To support the Committee in its recruitment of well-qualified experts to serve on sanctions monitoring groups, teams and panels, a note verbale was sent to all Member States on 11 December to request the nomination of qualified candidates for membership in the roster of experts. In addition, a note verbale was sent to all Member States on 7 December notifying them of upcoming vacancies on the Group of Experts and providing information on recruitment timelines, areas of expertise and pertinent requirements.

35. The Division continued to provide support to the Group of Experts, conducting an induction for newly appointed members and assisting in the preparation of the Group's final report submitted in June and its midterm report submitted in November.

36. The Group of Experts participated in the fifth annual inter-panel coordination workshop, held in New York on 5 and 6 December, organized by the Secretariat. On 7 and 8 December, the Division, in cooperation with United Nations system partners, conducted a workshop on investigative interview techniques for 10 experts from sanctions monitoring groups, teams and panels. Three members of the Group participated therein.

37. The Secretariat continued to update and maintain the Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanctions List and the committee-specific sanctions lists in the six official languages and the three technical formats. Furthermore, the Secretariat implemented improvements concerning the effective utilization of and access to sanctions lists, including through the creation of links within list entries, as appropriate, to INTERPOL-United Nations Security Council Special Notices, as well as the development in English of the data model approved in 2011 by the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, as requested by the Security Council in paragraph 48 of resolution 2253 (2015).

United Nations S/2017/1104

Security Council

Distr.: General
26 December 2017

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 29 December 2016 (S/2016/1129), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) until 31 December 2019 and requested me to submit a report every six months on the implementation of its mandate. The present report covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2017 and provides an overview of developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel. It also outlines the activities of UNOWAS and progress made in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. In addition, it provides an update on the situation in the Lake Chad basin, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2349 (2017).

II. Developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel

2. During the reporting period, political tensions relating to constitutional reform and political dialogue processes in Guinea, Mauritania, the Niger and Togo took centre stage in those countries. Elections were held in Liberia and Senegal, while electoral preparations continued in Guinea and Sierra Leone. Some progress was made in key reform processes in Burkina Faso and the Gambia. Nevertheless, the security situation in West Africa and the Sahel remained fragile. Terrorist activities and cross-border crime, including piracy and trafficking in drugs and weapons, continued to pose threats to the stability of the region. While activities by Boko Haram surged, a significant number of the group's fighters surrendered to national authorities. There were also internal security challenges in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. Although the humanitarian situation in the region remained dire, West African economies continued their positive trajectory. Moreover, several countries made progress in the promotion and protection of human rights.

A. Political and governance trends

3. In Burkina Faso, the constitutional reform and national reconciliation processes continued slowly. Meanwhile, the Speaker of the National Assembly and Chair of the ruling Mouvement du peuple pour le progrès, Salif Diallo, passed away in France on 19 August. He was replaced by Alassane Bala Sakandé, also a member of the ruling party, on 8 September. On 10 October, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Djibril

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Bassole, was temporarily released from prison pending trial and placed under house arrest. He had been imprisoned since September 2015 because of his alleged involvement in the failed coup attempt of 2015. His release renewed controversy about the capacity of the judicial authorities to speedily bring to trial individuals accused of crimes committed under the previous political dispensation.

4. In Côte d'Ivoire, a government reshuffle was announced on 19 July. The Minister of the Interior and Security, Hamed Bakayoko, was reassigned to the Ministry of Defence, while his former post went to the former Mayor of Abidjan, Sidiki Diakite. Changes also occurred within the ruling Rassemblement des republicains (RDR), which held its third congress on 9 and 10 September. During the congress, Henriette Diabaté, who has been Secretary-General of RDR since 1999, was elected President of the party, while the current Prime Minister, Amadou Gon Coulibaly, was appointed its First Vice-President.

5. In the Gambia, the administration of the President, Adama Barrow, launched reform processes in the areas of security, transitional justice and reconciliation. Rumours of possible attempts by supporters of the former President, Yahya Jammeh, to destabilize the country from abroad did not materialize. Political tension remained localized in the Foni area, a stronghold of the former President. To mitigate the tension, a dialogue and reconciliation event was organized by the National Council for Civic Education with residents of the area in June. On 8 September, Fatoumata Tambajang was appointed Vice-President, following the adoption of a constitutional amendment raising the age limit for serving as President or Vice-President from 65 to 75 years. She was sworn in on 9 November.

6. In Guinea, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that local elections would be held on 4 February 2018. Meanwhile, the opposition continued to stage demonstrations calling for the full implementation of the political agreement of 12 October 2016 and suspended its participation in the follow-up committee responsible for overseeing the implementation of the agreement. Protests were also conducted by citizens in mining communities in the Boké region of the country to raise complaints about the inadequate provision of social services. In September, protesters clashed with security forces, which resulted in two deaths and several injuries.

7. In Liberia, general elections were held on 10 October. Twenty presidential candidates and 1,026 legislative candidates participated in the polls, which were marked by high voter turnout and a peaceful environment. Regional and international partners, including the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), deployed electoral observation missions. In the presidential election, George Weah, of the Coalition for Democratic Change, received 38.4 per cent of the vote, while the incumbent Vice-President, Joseph Boakai, of the Unity Party, came in second with 28.8 per cent. A run-off presidential election, initially scheduled for 7 November, was postponed by the Supreme Court following the filing of complaints against the National Elections Commission management of the electoral process by the Ali Liberia Coalition Party, the Liberty Party and the Unity Party. On 7 December, the Court dismissed the complaints for lack of evidence and ordered the National Elections Commission to proceed with scheduling the run-off. It has now been scheduled for 26 December.

8. In Mauritania, a constitutional referendum called by the President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, was held on 5 August. It approved the abolishment of the Senate and the establishment of regional councils, in addition to changes to the national flag, the national anthem and the composition of the Constitutional Court. Several opposition parties and civil society organizations, which had campaigned for a boycott of the referendum, rejected its results. They argued that the referendum could

pave the way for further constitutional changes to extend presidential powers and remove term limits. The President has repeatedly denied such claims. Following the referendum, the opposition leader, Mohamed Ould Ghadda, who had been an outspoken opponent of the referendum, was arrested on allegations of corruption. A number of senators and journalists were also summoned and interrogated.

9. In the Niger, tensions between the ruling party and the opposition continued in the absence of an inclusive dialogue process. A new electoral code, under which a permanent independent national electoral commission was established, was adopted on 14 October.

10. Nigeria witnessed renewed secessionist agitation for an independent Biafra State in the south-eastern part of the country. The agitation exposed persisting ethnic and religious divisions between mainly Muslim communities in the north and Christian Igbo communities in the south-east. In what was considered a counter-move to the agitation, the Arewa Youth Forum, a coalition of youth leaders in northern Nigeria, issued an ultimatum to all members of the Igbo community residing in the north to leave the region by 1 October. In response, the then Acting President, Yemi Osinbajo, led consultations with political, religious and traditional authorities to promote national unity. In addition, following his return from medical leave abroad, the President, Muhammadu Buhari, underscored in a speech on 21 August that the unity of Nigeria was "not negotiable". Meanwhile, the Government continued to pursue its anti-graft campaign. In that regard, the exoneration of the President of the Senate, Abubakar Bukola Saraki, from charges of fraud prompted civil society activists to question the independence of the judiciary.

11. In Senegal, legislative elections were held on 30 July. The ruling coalition, Benno Bokk Yakaar, secured 125 out of the 165 seats in the National Assembly. The coalition led by the former President, Abdoulaye Wade, came second. Although elected to the parliament, the Mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Sall, has remained in detention since March on charges of mismanagement of public funds.

12. In Sierra Leone, preparations continued for the holding of presidential, legislative and local elections scheduled for 7 March 2018. Violent incidents, involving party supporters, occurred throughout the reporting period. Meanwhile, the constitutional referendum, which had been scheduled for September 2017, was not held.

13. In Togo, a wave of protests was initiated by the opposition Parti national panafricain on 19 August in Lome, Sokode and Kara. The protesters amplified their long-standing demands for a return to the Constitution of 1992, the introduction of a two-round voting system for the presidential election and the full implementation of the comprehensive political agreement of 2006, signed by the Government, the opposition and other national stakeholders. On 19 September, the National Assembly adopted a bill to amend the Constitution by reintroducing presidential term limits and a two-round voting modality for the presidential election. The opposition boycotted the vote on the bill, as it did not include a provision, similar to that contained in the Constitution of 1992, stipulating that "under no circumstances" could a person serve for more than two presidential terms. Consequently, the parliamentary vote did not attain the four-fifths majority required to amend the Constitution and the bill was deferred, to be voted on through a referendum that has yet to be held. Regional leaders have since taken the lead in efforts to assist national stakeholders in peacefully resolving the crisis.

B. Security trends

14. The security situation in West Africa and the Sahel continued to be marked by asymmetrical and terrorist attacks against security forces and civilians. Some countries in the region faced several internal security challenges. In addition, maritime piracy, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime continued to affect the security situation.

15. In Burkina Faso, a terrorist attack in Ouagadougou, carried out on 13 August, resulted in 18 casualties. The northern province of Soum witnessed frequent attacks on military and civilian targets, leading to, among other things, the closure of many schools in the area. Meanwhile, militant activities, including those carried out by the home-grown Ansar al-Islam movement, gradually spread to the north-western part of the country.

16. In Côte d'Ivoire, the reporting period was marked by clashes relating to land in the cocoa belt, attacks against security facilities, a wave of jailbreaks and continuing protests by former elements of the Forces nouvelles who had been demobilized following the post-electoral crisis. On 7 September, the Minister of the Interior and Security announced that 35 people had been arrested following investigations into the attacks on security installations. On 9 November, the Chief of Protocol of the Speaker of the National Assembly, Souleymane Kamarate Kone, was arrested following an investigation into a cache of weapons that had been discovered in Bouake in May.

17. In Mali, the security situation was characterized by asymmetrical attacks against security forces and humanitarian actors as well as by fighting between parties signatory to the peace agreement. As a result, the anticipated reinstatement of State services faced challenges, while some local communities resorted to aligning themselves with militant groups for protection.

18. In the Niger, multiple attacks in the Tillaberi region resulted in the deaths of several security personnel, including members of a mixed patrol of special forces of the Niger and the United States of America, on 4 October. However, the number of violent incidents declined significantly in the Diffa region, on the border with north-eastern Nigeria.

19. Nigeria continued to face multiple security challenges. Security forces clashed with members of the secessionist Indigenous People of Biafra movement in Abia State in September. In addition, there were violent confrontations between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt and other regions, leading to increased intercommunal tensions. Some 100 people died as a result of two incidents that occurred in July, in Kaduna and Benue States. On 16 October, 29 people were killed while seeking shelter in a school in Plateau State. The level of armed violence in the Delta area remained low owing to the reinstated amnesty programme, new deployments of troops in six Delta states and peace initiatives by local, regional, and national leaders.

20. According to the International Maritime Bureau, the number of incidents of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea fell slightly during the reporting period. Between January and September, the Bureau registered 31 actual and attempted attacks on vessels in the larger Gulf of Guinea area, compared with 46 incidents during the same period in 2016, accounting for one quarter of such incidents reported by the Bureau worldwide. The majority of the incidents occurred in Nigerian waters.

21. Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime remained a source of instability. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), several seizures of drugs were reported, including a number of cocaine shipments that were confiscated between Mali and the Niger in September. In Mauritania on 24 September, security forces arrested smugglers carrying drugs, weapons and

communications equipment. In Nigeria, the authorities reported the seizure of several container-loads of weapons being smuggled into the country.

Boko Haram

22. National and international efforts notwithstanding, attacks by Boko Haram surged during the reporting period, especially in Nigeria. Of the 156 suspected Boko Haram attacks carried out in July, August and September, 100 took place in Nigeria and 5 in the Niger. Overall, 295 fatalities were recorded between June and September in the two countries, exceeding figures for the first six months of the year. In Nigeria, Boko Haram continued to conduct raids and incursions, often using suicide bombers, usually women and girls, and improvised explosive devices targeting crowded places. Security forces were also targeted, as illustrated by the raid on a military base conducted in the town of Marte, Borno State, on 13 October and the attack on a military convoy carried out near Damboa, Borno State, on 18 October. Eleven cases of abduction by Boko Haram were also recorded during the reporting period. Of the approximately 32 people abducted, 19 were reportedly minors, including 13 girls. Meanwhile, significant numbers of Boko Haram fighters surrendered to national authorities.

23. The withdrawal of Chadian troops from the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Niger, which was completed in September, had an impact on the response effort of the Force. In addition, allegations of human rights violations by security personnel undermined cooperation with affected communities and intelligence-gathering.

24. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union visited the Lake Chad basin from 27 to 31 July. It subsequently adopted a decision, on 28 September, in which it expressed concern about the resource challenges facing the Multinational Joint Task Force, reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive approach in efforts to combat Boko Haram and called for a dedicated summit of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and ECOWAS to be held to develop a strategy for the promotion of peace, security and development in the Lake Chad basin.

25. From 2 to 4 November, the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission convened a regional stabilization conference in N'Djamena on supporting the development of a framework for a regional stabilization strategy for areas affected by Boko Haram. Conference participants recommended the establishment of a task force for the development of a comprehensive strategy for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities in the areas affected by Boko Haram.

Sahel/Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel

26. Following the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 2359 (2017) on the deployment of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), a delegation from the Council visited Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania from 19 to 22 October. Subsequently, on 30 October, the Council convened a ministerial meeting on the Force, during which I gave a briefing on the status of its operationalization. I reaffirmed the need for the Force to have sound mechanisms for the protection of civilians. I also reaffirmed the necessity of a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of the situation in the Sahel.

27. On 8 December, the Security Council adopted resolution 2391 (2017), in which it set out the modalities for United Nations support to the Force. I was requested to conclude a technical agreement among the States members of the G-5 Sahel, the European Union and the United Nations for the provision of operational and logistical support to the Force through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

28. On 13 July, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, and the European Union announced the launch of the Alliance for the Sahel, intended to ensure security and stability in the short term and development in the long term in the region. The initiative involves other States members of the European Union, the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is intended to fast track the provision of assistance, including the mobilization of resources for the Joint Force. On 13 December, the President of France convened a high-level meeting with the States members of the G-5 Sahel and their partners in Paris to mobilize support for the Force.

C. Socioeconomic trends

29. West African economies continued their positive trajectory. Economic growth rates of 2.5 per cent in 2017 and 4 per cent in 2018 have been forecast by the African Development Bank for West Africa, owing mainly to improvements in oil production in Nigeria and rising global commodity prices. According to the International Monetary Fund, the economies of Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal are expected to expand in 2017 by 7.6 per cent and 6.8 per cent, respectively, driven mostly by agriculture and investments in the private and public sectors. Ghana is also registering its best performance in three years, while recovery is slower in Liberia and Mauritania, at 2.6 per cent and 3.8 per cent, respectively.

D. Humanitarian trends

30. Widespread food insecurity, forced displacement, climate change, chronic vulnerability and susceptibility to epidemics continued to affect populations in West Africa and the Sahel. More than 5,300 cases of cholera were registered in the north-eastern part of Nigeria and some 2,035 cases of hepatitis E in the Diffa region of the Niger. Across the subregion, some 30 million people remain food-insecure and 4.7 million children under 5 years of age are acutely malnourished. The number of people classified as severely food-insecure has risen by 500,000 in the Lake Chad basin since the beginning of the year, owing mainly to the Boko Haram crisis. In Mali, the number of persons requiring immediate food assistance increased by 350,000 between March and August. In north-eastern Nigeria, increased international and government relief assistance has helped to avert the threat of famine. Food security is expected to slightly improve in the coming months, owing in part to an increase in agricultural production and a reduction in food prices.

31. The number of people suffering from the consequences of forced displacement as a result of conflict and insecurity rose to 5.2 million from 4.9 million at the beginning of the year. More than 2.4 million persons remain displaced in the Lake Chad basin area owing to Boko Haram activities, including nearly 1.7 million in Nigeria. More than 208,400 Nigerian refugees are displaced in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, which also host sizeable populations of internally displaced persons. Insecurity in the Diffa region of the Niger led to cross-border movements of several thousand persons to Chad. In Mali, continuing violence in the Ségou, Kidal, Mopti, Timbuktu and Ménaka regions led to a slight increase in the number of internally displaced persons (from 52,000 in May to 58,600 in September). Some 142,386 Malian refugees remain dispersed in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger, while growing insecurity in the border areas of Burkina Faso and the Niger has reduced absorption capacity for refugees from Mali. The insecurity in northern Mali and north-eastern Nigeria has limited humanitarian access and led to a suspension of lifesaving humanitarian deliveries to those areas. Moreover, in Togo, following raids

and arrests reportedly conducted by national security forces in the aftermath of the opposition's demonstrations, some 500 persons from Mango, in the Savanes region, reportedly crossed over into the villages of Chereponi and Zabzugu in the Northern region of Ghana.

32. During the reporting period, severe cases of flooding resulted in loss of life, destruction of infrastructure and population displacement in several countries in the region. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as at mid-October, some 11,000 people were affected in Mali, 11,800 in Ghana, 30,000 in Burkina Faso, 100,000 in Nigeria and 200,000 in the Niger. In Sierra Leone, a landslide and floods claimed the lives of more than 600 people and displaced more than 6,000.

33. The humanitarian response to the Lake Chad basin crisis, scaled up further in 2017, has reached more than 5 million people. Needs, however, are likely to remain acute into 2018 and beyond, and sustained aid and recovery efforts will be required. By September, of the $1.5 billion required to address humanitarian needs in the Lake Chad basin for 2017, only 54 per cent had been received. United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations are still seeking $661 million to address the most urgent needs until the end of the year.

E. Trends on human rights

34. Some progress was made in strengthening legal, policy and institutional frameworks to protect and promote international human rights standards in some countries in the region. In September, the President of the Gambia signed the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Moreover, a technical committee for the establishment of a truth, reconciliation and reparations commission launched countrywide consultations. The Commission of Inquiry, established to track assets held by the former President, Yahya Jammeh, also began its work. Meanwhile, national and international civil society groups announced in October an international campaign to seek justice for victims of the former regime.

35. In Nigeria, the Government took specific steps to ensure accountability for crimes committed by Boko Haram, by initiating the trial of alleged perpetrators. The Government reported that 45 of the some 1,700 accused had been sentenced, while 468 had been ordered to undergo deradicalization programmes. Moreover, in response to reports alleging human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions and torture by the security forces, Nigeria established a judicial commission to review the compliance of its armed forces with international human rights and humanitarian law in the fight against extremism.

36. In Burkina Faso on 27 July, the President, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, promulgated a law establishing measures for the protection of human rights defenders. On 25 October, the trial of alleged perpetrators of the failed coup of September 2015 began.

37. In Côte d'Ivoire, perceptions of impunity for crimes committed during the post-electoral crisis of 2010 and 2011, in addition to intercommunal clashes linked to access to land, undermined social cohesion and national reconciliation. In Guinea, human rights and civil society organizations welcomed the announcement by the Minister of Justice on 8 November that investigations into the stadium massacre of September 2009 had been concluded. The Minister, however, stated that the beginning of the trial on the massacre might be delayed owing to a lack of funds.

38. In Togo, at least 14 people died during clashes with security forces. Confrontations between civilians and security agencies also claimed casualties in Guinea, where at least 4 civilians were killed and 77 other people, including security forces, were wounded. In Nigeria, human rights organizations condemned the alleged arbitrary arrest and torture by the military of people affiliated with the Indigenous People of Biafra movement engaged in secessionist protests.

39. Recent media reports on trafficking in persons in Libya linked to illegal migration, including from the region of West Africa and the Sahel, sparked international outrage. In my statement of 20 November, I urged the international community to unite in fighting that scourge. I also discussed the issue with international partners on the margins of the Fifth African Union-European Union Summit, held in Abidjan on 29 and 30 November. At the summit, the two organizations adopted a joint statement on the migrant situation in Libya, in which they condemned the inhumane treatment of African migrants and refugees by criminal groups. The African Union, the European Union and the United Nations also agreed to put in place a joint task force, aimed at saving and protecting the lives of migrants and refugees along the routes, in particular inside Libya.

F. Trends on gender issues

40. During the reporting period, the number of women in senior government positions decreased in Guinea, the Niger and Sierra Leone. On 6 October in the Niger, the first ladies of the States members of ECOWAS called for an end to female genital mutilation in the subregion. ECOWAS, together with its partners, developed a regional action plan for the integration of a gender and youth dimension into efforts to combat money-laundering, the financing of terrorism and related crimes. In Nigeria, a national conference was held in September to build momentum for the implementation of the country's second national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, youth and peace and security.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

A. Good offices and special assignments by my Special Representative

41. My Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel continued to support efforts to sustain peace in the region, in collaboration with regional and international partners, by promoting and supporting inclusive national political dialogues, constitutional and democratic reforms, and transparent and peaceful electoral processes.

42. My Special Representative held extensive consultations with national stakeholders, regional institutions and leaders in support of a peaceful resolution of the political crisis in Togo. From 6 to 8 September, he undertook a mission to Lomé, during which he met the President, Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, government officials, leaders of the opposition, representatives of civil society and the media and representatives of the international community. He appealed for restraint and urged political stakeholders to resolve their differences peacefully. Furthermore, he collaborated with the African Union and ECOWAS on the issuance of two joint communiques in which the parties were encouraged to engage in dialogue. He also held consultations with the President of Ghana, Nana Akuffo-Addo, and the Ghanaian

mediation team in the lead-up to the preliminary talks for the Togolese dialogue process, which began in Lomé on 27 November.

43. In line with Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), UNOWAS continued its efforts to help to sustain peace in Burkina Faso and the Gambia. Following a meeting with the President of Burkina Faso on 3 May, my Special Representative dispatched two support teams to Ouagadougou, in July and August, to enhance coordination with the United Nations country team. He returned to Ouagadougou on 31 August to discuss United Nations support for the organization of a national security forum, which was held in October and was attended by my Special Representative and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Burkina Faso. Within the framework of the sustaining peace initiative, the United Nations deployed senior rule of law experts to provide technical assistance to the High Council for Reconciliation and National Unity, as well as advice to national authorities on justice and security sector reforms. The United Nations also facilitated consultations between the High Council and national stakeholders. The first meeting was held on 23 November in Ouagadougou, with the support of the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations country team. Participants included representatives of political parties, civil society organizations, victims and think tanks, as well as members of the defence and security forces.

44. In the Gambia on 12 September, on the margins of the launch of the security sector reform process, my Special Representative discussed United Nations support for the country with the President. His visit was followed by a UNOWAS technical team mission to Banjul from 13 to 15 September, which was focused on coordinating sustaining peace initiatives with the United Nations country team. Throughout the reporting period, support provided by the senior communication adviser deployed by the Department of Political Affairs helped to enhance the Government's communication to the public at a time when expectations for democratic dividends and increased transparency were rising in the country.

45. My Special Representative met the President of the Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, on 29 August and called for an inclusive political dialogue with the opposition. As a follow-up to the visit, my Special Representative dispatched a multidisciplinary team to the Niger from 2 to 10 October. In Guinea, he continued to work with national, regional and international partners to advocate the implementation of the political agreement of 12 October 2016. He held informal consultations with Guinean government officials and international partners in the country on the margins of a workshop on lessons learned from the 2015/16 elections in West Africa, held in Conakry on 25 and 26 July 2017.

46. My Special Representative dispatched two UNOWAS missions to Mauritania to engage with national stakeholders on the constitutional process. He continued consultations with the President, including on the margins of the General Assembly.

47. Following the closure of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire in June, my Special Representative visited Côte d'Ivoire from 18 to 20 July to hold consultations with national and international stakeholders. He also dispatched an integrated mission from UNOWAS in October to provide support to the United Nations Resident Coordinator.

48. My Special Representative visited Freetown following the mudslide disaster of 14 August. In anticipation of the elections to be held in Sierra Leone in March 2018, he conducted another mission to the country, from 19 to 23 November, with the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Marcel de Souza, and the Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union, Minata Samate Cessouma.

49. My Special Representative conducted a mission to Liberia from 8 to 12 October to hold consultations with my Special Representative for Liberia and Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), on transition arrangements following the closure of UNMIL. He also interacted with presidential candidates and electoral observation missions, and discussed subregional issues with the President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The mission was preceded by a UNOWAS multidisciplinary technical mission that identified areas of cooperation with the United Nations country team in Liberia. The technical mission also participated in a workshop for national stakeholders, jointly organized by ECOWAS and the Mano River Union and entitled "Partnering for peaceful elections in Liberia".

50. In his capacity as my High-level Representative for Nigeria, my Special Representative undertook a mission to the country from 30 October to 9 November. He continued consultations with the President, state governors and key national stakeholders to promote the establishment of a consensual national peace architecture. He also underscored the importance of the unity of Nigeria and called for timely preparations for the general elections scheduled for February 2019. On 8 November in Abuja, he, together with ECOWAS, launched a study on pastoralism, security and sustainable livelihoods in West Africa.

B. Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

51. Insecurity in areas affected by Boko Haram continued to hinder the activities of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission. Tensions in the Bakassi area were swiftly resolved with the support of the Commission. Nevertheless, as reported in my letter to the Security Council on progress made by the Commission (S/2017/78), increased agitation in English-speaking areas of Cameroon continued to generate concern.

52. On 14 and 15 September, my Special Representative, who also serves as Chair of the Commission, facilitated a meeting in Abuja between Cameroonian and Nigerian delegations, who agreed on an agenda for resolving security concerns and outstanding areas of disagreement. The meeting was preceded, from 24 to 28 August in Geneva, by deliberations of the Subcommission on Demarcation, whose report was adopted by the two parties. Overall, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the judgment of the International Court of Justice of October 2002 and to fully demarcating the land and maritime boundaries shared by the two countries. Meanwhile, procurement and related activities were completed for the resumption of pillar construction and emplacement in December.

C. Enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security

Enhancing subregional capacities

53. UNOWAS and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) supported the organization of an interregional workshop on best practices for the ECOWAS Commission and the ECCAS general secretariat, held in Abuja from 11 to 13 September. During the workshop, the two organizations agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding to broaden and institutionalize their cooperation, including through interregional meetings and joint planning. UNOWAS participated in a joint retreat of the African Union, ECCAS and ECOWAS on early warning systems, held in Dakar from 16 to 20 October. UNOWAS also participated in a workshop, held in Dakar from 30 October to 3 November, on the revision of the indicators of the ECOWAS early warning system against the background of emerging peace and security challenges in the subregion.

Security sector reform

54. UNOWAS continued to engage with ECOWAS in support of the operationalization of its framework on security sector reform and governance. In May, ECOWAS, the European Union and UNOWAS conducted a joint security sector reform mission to the Gambia. Following the mission, an office of national security was established and a national security adviser was appointed. Meanwhile, senior members of the military command were replaced and several soldiers were detained or dismissed over allegations that they had attempted to destabilize the country. On 12 September, my Special Representative attended the official launch of the security sector reform process chaired by the President.

55. In Burkina Faso, the Senior Security Sector Reform Adviser deployed by the United Nations supported a needs assessment of the security sector, promoted synergies between defence and security forces and advocated the streamlining of rule of law and democratic governance procedures. On 24 October, my Special Representative participated in the opening of a three-day national security forum, organized with the support of UNOWAS and the United Nations country team, at which key elements of a new national security policy were identified. The forum was preceded by regional consultations and the deployment of a multidisciplinary team from UNDP and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure an inclusive and participatory process.

56. In Guinea, the United Nations security sector support project was harmonized with initiatives being carried out in the police and justice sectors.

Boko Haram

57. My Special Representative continued to support diplomatic, security and humanitarian responses to the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram. During the reporting period, he promoted a joint initiative by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and UNODC to assist States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating persons associated with Boko Haram. Activities under the initiative have begun in Nigeria, as have preparations in other countries of the Lake Chad basin. With the support of the European Union, the Executive Directorate and UNODC also assisted Nigerian authorities in strengthening criminal justice responses to terrorism, including by facilitating inter-agency coordination and cooperation in investigations and prosecutions. Under the overall coordination of the Nigerian office of the National Security Adviser, the Executive Directorate, UNODC, the European Union and the International Organization for Migration conducted a joint planning mission to Maiduguri, Nigeria, from 18 to 22 September.

58. On 6 October, my Special Representatives for West Africa and the Sahel and for Central Africa convened a joint meeting of UNOWAS and UNOCA in Dakar to discuss ways to enhance coordination and support for regional partners. Discussions were focused on joint support for the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the efforts to combat Boko Haram, in addition to other areas of cooperation, including maritime security. As part of his tour to Nigeria from 30 October to 9 November, my Special Representative stressed the need for regional and international partners to assist Nigeria in combating Boko Haram.

Strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union

59. On 11 and 12 July, UNOWAS met the secretariat of the Mano River Union in Freetown to discuss ways to reinforce cooperation. They agreed to step up engagement with UNDP and UNMIL ahead of the Mission's drawdown. On

24 August, my Special Representative met with the Secretary-General of the Mano River Union in Freetown to discuss steps needed to formalize a joint cooperation framework.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

60. During the reporting period, the Interregional Coordination Centre in Yaoundé became operational. At a meeting held in Yaoundé on 16 and 17 August, UNOCA and UNOWAS contributed to an evaluation of the implementation of the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa. In September, UNOWAS held consultations with the Centre's leadership during a meeting of the chiefs of navies of Central and West Africa convened in Dakar. My Special Representative also continued his advocacy to enhance coordination and information-sharing, and urged Member States to deploy permanent staff to the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in West Africa, based in Abidjan. From 16 to 20 October, within the framework of the "Africa-China-United States Consultation for Peace" facilitated by the Carter Center, my Special Representative led a delegation, including the Director of the Interregional Coordination Centre and the Secretary-General of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, to Beijing to foster cooperation with Chinese counterparts.

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

61. My Special Representative chaired a meeting of the West Africa Coast Initiative Policy Committee, held in Abidjan on 5 December. At the meeting, the Ministers of Security and Justice of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone discussed ways to enhance the operations and financial sustainability of the transnational organized crime units within the framework of the implementation of the ECOWAS action plan on illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse for the period 2016–2020. In addition, UNOWAS engaged in close liaison with UNODC with regard to the implementation of several current projects, including the development of curricula on organized crime and efforts to combat corruption for police, gendarmerie and judicial training schools; the establishment of joint airport interdiction task forces in Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria; and support for courts in francophone countries in the launch of the Global Judicial Integrity Network in 2018.

D. Implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and support for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel

62. UNOWAS continued to advance the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel through a whole-of-system approach. Progress was made on a more effective division of labour, reduction in duplications and cooperation between the field and Headquarters.

63. On 7 July, the Executive Committee working group on the Sahel, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, held its inaugural meeting. On 11 August, it endorsed an action plan for the implementation of the strategy, established a clear division of roles and responsibilities between United Nations entities, agreed on a timeline of action and emphasized the need to strengthen collaboration with all regional partners. It also conducted a mapping of activities by the United Nations and international partners in the Sahel, which revealed that only 30 per cent of planned resources were available for the implementation of the strategy, highlighted the challenges linked to the limited absorption capacity of targeted countries and coordination challenges among partners.

It recommended, among other things, that strategic coordination should be improved, the Sustainable Development Goals mainstreamed, public trust in the State enhanced and governance and human rights strengthened.

64. A meeting of the steering committee for the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, convened and chaired by UNOWAS and attended by the Deputy Secretary-General, was held on 27 October in Dakar, bringing together United Nations entities. The participants reiterated the need to ensure that interventions under the strategy were aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and complemented the priorities of the region.

65. The Deputy Secretary-General strengthened coordination and cooperation with France and Germany under the framework of the Alliance for the Sahel, which recognized the strategy as overarching framework for the international response to the issues affecting the Sahel. UNOWAS continued to support the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel chaired by Chad. In that regard, it facilitated discussions between the President of Chad and United Nations regional entities to ensure alignment of the Platform's thematic groups on security, governance, development and resilience with the strategy's working groups. UNOWAS also supported visits to all G-5 Sahel countries by the President of Chad and the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel to help to increase coordination. From 9 to 11 October, the Chadian and Mission delegations, accompanied by UNOWAS, met the G-5 Sahel secretariat in Nouakchott.

66. UNOWAS also continued to support the G-5 Sahel in building regional security cooperation mechanisms. In that regard, a feasibility study was concluded with respect to the establishment of a Sahelian threat analysis and early warning centre, which is expected to be established in 2018 in Mauritania. UNOWAS, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also participated in a United Nations scoping mission, led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations from 20 to 24 September, to all G-5 Sahel countries on the operationalization of the Joint Force. The mission facilitated the gathering of information on progress made in establishing the Force. The findings of the scoping mission informed my report to the Security Council on the Force (S/2017/869).

67. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2195 (2014) and the statement by the President of the Security Council of 8 December 2015 (S/PRST/2015/24), the Office of Counter-Terrorism continues its efforts to provide capacity-building assistance to the States members of the G-5 Sahel through the regional Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism Initiative, the priority areas of which are aligned with a need assessment conducted by United Nations entities and approved by the G-5 Sahel countries. Priorities include the prevention of violent extremism, border management and cross-border cooperation, the rule of law and criminal justice, and coordination.

68. A regional workshop on border security management for the countries of the G-5 Sahel was held under the Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism Initiative framework in Niamey from 5 to 8 September. It was organized in collaboration with the permanent secretariat of the G-5 Sahel and the liaison cell of UNOWAS. Attended by senior practitioners from the G-5 Sahel countries, it was focused on strengthening intra- and inter-agency cooperation, with a view to countering terrorism and stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters in the region.

F. Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

69. On 25 and 26 July in Conakry, UNOWAS conducted a workshop on lessons learned from the 2015/16 elections in West Africa. More than 50 representatives of electoral management bodies and other stakeholders, including United Nations entities from the subregion, exchanged views on how to enhance the quality of upcoming electoral processes in West Africa. Participants emphasized the need for inclusive political dialogue and for the establishment of reliable civil registries to permit the regular updating of electoral registers.

70. From 28 October to 4 November, UNOWAS participated in the sixty-first ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, held in Banjul. It supported the forum of non-governmental organizations accompanying the session and co-chaired two panels on human rights issues in West Africa and the Sahel.

71. UNOWAS continued to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, youth and peace and security. At a conference on peace education held in Accra on 27 and 28 July, UNOWAS advocated the regular holding of national conferences to disseminate and implement resolution 2250 (2015) on youth and peace and security. UNOWAS also contributed to an international youth forum on peace, security and irregular migration, held in Niamey on 9 and 10 August under the patronage of the President. At the event, participants from 25 countries, mostly in West Africa, recommended the creation of an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship and the involvement of youth leaders in conflict management. On 29 August, UNOWAS hosted an exchange session on the role of youth in the prevention of violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel, organized by the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel. On 15 November, my Special Representative addressed youth leaders in Ghana on the theme "Equipping the youth to renegotiate Africa's position in the era of Africa's rising".

72. UNOWAS undertook joint missions with representatives of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, OHCHR and the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel, to Cotonou, Praia and N'Djamena to advocate the adoption of national action plans as called for in Security Council resolutions on women, youth and peace and security. On the International Day of Peace, 21 September, UNOWAS organized a conference in partnership with the Senegalese section of the Working Group, bringing together more than 100 women and youth leaders to discuss migration, statelessness and other challenges. In addition, UNOWAS provided technical and financial support for the establishment of the Senegal-Gambia-Guinea-Bissau Women's Forum.

IV. Observations and recommendations

73. There were several positive developments in West Africa and the Sahel during the reporting period, notably progress made by some countries in carrying out political, constitutional and security sector reforms.

74. I commend the authorities in Burkina Faso and the Gambia for the progress achieved in reforming their security sectors. I also welcome continuing efforts by the authorities in Côte d'Ivoire to fully reform its security sector, and encourage them to remain focused on advancing national reconciliation and social cohesion, including by addressing issues relating to land ownership and citizenship.

75. I commend the people of Liberia for their peaceful participation in the legislative elections and in the first round of the run-off. I call upon national actors to ensure the peaceful holding of the run-off. I reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations to continuing to assist the authorities in consolidating peace and promoting sustainable and inclusive development. Following the closure of UNMIL in March 2018, UNOWAS will continue to follow developments in Liberia in the context of its regional mandate.

76. I urge national stakeholders in Sierra Leone to work together to ensure a level playing field for all candidates ahead of the country's first elections without the presence of a United Nations mission.

77. I welcome the continuing regional efforts aimed at assisting national stakeholders in Togo to overcome their differences peacefully through dialogue and in line with the democratic aspirations of the Togolese people.

78. I remain worried by the prevalence of terrorist and violent extremist threats in the region and the linkages with transnational organized crime. I note with concern the continued armed attacks by militant and extremist groups on civilian targets. I am particularly concerned about the related closure of schools in affected areas in Burkina Faso and Mali, which is depriving the younger generation of their right to education. I congratulate the Government of Nigeria on conducting trials of Boko Haram suspects, and urge it to ensure due process and transparency by granting access to human rights observers. I also welcome the establishment by Nigeria of a judicial commission to uphold compliance by its armed forces with national laws and international human rights standards.

79. I commend the efforts of the countries participating in the Multinational Joint Task Force, which have reduced the operational capacities and geographical reach of Boko Haram. Nevertheless, persistent attacks are hampering resettlement and rehabilitation efforts and provide a breeding ground for extremism. I reiterate my call for stronger partnership among the affected countries, as well as with regional organizations, including the African Union, and underscore the need for all counter-insurgency efforts to be carried out in full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. I reiterate my call upon the international community to increase its political, humanitarian, early recovery, logistical and financial assistance to the affected countries and to the Task Force and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

80. I encourage countries of the Lake Chad basin to continue their efforts to reintegrate Boko Haram victims and other categories of individuals associated with Boko Haram, and urge the international community to assist them in that endeavour. I reiterate my call for a regional strategy for addressing the root causes of the crisis in the basin. In that regard, I welcome the holding of the first regional stabilization conference in the basin region and hope that the conference will be the first step towards the development of such a strategy.

81. I urge national authorities not to relent in their efforts to provide critical humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities and to advocate the disbursement of outstanding funds pledged at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference for Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region, held in February 2017.

82. I welcome the support that regional and international partners continue to provide to the countries and people of the Sahel and urge them to join their efforts and increase their contributions in line with the growing needs in the region and in alignment with national and regional priorities. It is important to ensure that all efforts are well coordinated and complementary. The challenges in the Sahel are complex and multidimensional and require a sustained and holistic approach. In that regard, I

welcome the collegial efforts made by the entire United Nations system under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General towards recalibrating the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and further boosting its implementation through a more integrated, cross-pillar approach. These efforts will contribute to mobilizing additional resources for the Sahel and ensure that adequate support is provided and that the aid of the international community is well coordinated, complementary and in support of the countries of the Sahel.

83. I urge the international community to complement the security and military response to the Sahel crisis with development programmes to address the root causes of conflict, prevent tensions and violence, tackle exclusion and poverty, strengthen the resilience of institutions and communities and build peaceful and inclusive societies.

84. I commend the States members of the G-5 Sahel for their continued dedicated efforts to operationalize the Joint Force, as well as the strengthening of development aspects. I also extend my appreciation to the members of the Security Council for their support for that initiative. I reaffirm the urgent need for the establishment of an institutional, human rights and compliance framework for the Joint Force. These mechanisms are critical to ensure that its operations are aligned with and contribute to broader regional initiatives and do not harm the very populations whom the Force is intended to serve and contribute to strengthening their resilience to conflict.

85. I urge the international community to unite in fighting the scourge of trafficking in persons and to address migration flows in a comprehensive and human manner. A comprehensive regional approach to migration focusing on the protection of the rights of migrants, addressing the socioeconomic drivers of migration and promoting safe, regular and orderly migration is needed.

86. I note with concern the decline in the number of women in senior government positions in West Africa and the Sahel and urge countries in the subregion to take specific measures, in accordance with national and regional commitments, to enhance the empowerment of and political opportunities for women and promote inclusive development.

87. I welcome the commitment expressed by the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to completing the demarcation of the land and maritime boundaries shared by the two countries. I call upon partners to further support the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission to allow for the completion of its mandate and to give effect to the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002.

88. I wish to express my appreciation to the Governments of West Africa and the Sahel region, the African Union, ECOWAS, the G-5 Sahel, the Mano River Union, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission for their continued cooperation with UNOWAS. I also extend my appreciation to the United Nations system in West Africa and the Sahel, civil society organizations and other institutions for their close partnership with UNOWAS in the implementation of its mandate. I should like to express particular appreciation to my Special Representative, as well as the staff of UNOWAS and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, for their continuing efforts to help to advance peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel.